

### Book Review

***The Restless Wave: Good Times, Just Causes, Great Fights, and Other Appreciations***  
**By John McCain**  
**with Mark Salter**  
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### Author Note

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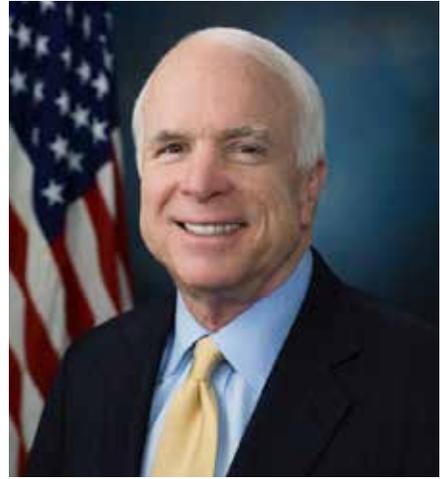
### Introduction

Senator John S. McCain (R-AZ) --- author of this book, an American hero, Vietnam veteran, prisoner of war, patriot, senator and family man --- recently lost his year-long battle with glioblastoma, an aggressive type of brain tumor that is very serious. He was the very definition of a leader: honest, open, and willing to acknowledge his mistakes. Many of us watched the ceremonies in celebration of his life. Those who reflected on his accomplishments educated us. He loved America, loved life and enjoyed laughter --- while at the same time fighting for the values of this great nation.

In his book, *The Restless Wave: Good Times, Just Causes, Great Fights, and Other Appreciations*, Senator McCain provides us with an in-depth look into his struggles over the last twenty plus years. It provides readers with a look into the things he valued highly: “Duty, Honor, Country.” In many ways the book provides, from his perspective, the experiences and events that formed his ideas. He was recognized by those around him as the “maverick” of the Senate. During his fight with cancer, Senator McCain talked with colleagues, undertook therapy and prepared for his fate since he was diagnosed. John McCain completed the first round of chemotherapy and radiation therapy in mid-August and passed on only days later. Shortly before his passing, Senator McCain was honored by his colleagues in Congress by passing legislation he championed, namely The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. It signed into law by President Trump on August 13, 2018.

By all accounts, John S. McCain was a controversial figure in American politics. He made decisions and cast votes on things that have frustrated both the left and the right. In the process, he has been revered and vilified. Nonetheless, one thing is clear. His decisions have been based on placing country above party; and this should be admired by Americans no matter their political and ideological beliefs.

Since his passing we have had the opportunity to read many stories about Senator McCain; and hopefully in his passing America will realize a new spirit of coming together and restoring the “regular order” through bi-partisan legislative approaches. This would be the greatest compliment that Congress could bestow upon their colleague, and the greatest gift they could provide this nation in his memory.



United States Senate

*Senator John McCain  
Official US Senate Portrait*

## Summary

The title of this book, *The Restless Wave*, is taken from a line in the Navy Hymn. It speaks to the perils faced by our mariners on the oceans who work to keep America free. This title does in many ways capture the spirit and life experiences faced by Senator John S. McCain. He was a decorated naval aviator who retired as a captain from the U.S. Navy. He was awarded the silver star, three bronze stars, and numerous other medals during his service to our country. He was a prisoner of war for over five years and suffered numerous injuries at the hands of his tormentors after his plane was shot down over Hanoi, Vietnam in October 1967.

His political career included service in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Prior to his passing, Senator McCain was Chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee. Even with such accomplishments, some of his prouder accomplishments include being a loving husband, the father of seven children and grandfather to multiple grandchildren. And, most important of all, John S. McCain was a great American patriot that placed “His Country” over political affiliation. He lived his life in service to his country because his forebearers lived that way. These things explain why on numerous occasions he was described and routinely recognized as a “maverick” in the Senate

This book is a well-written journey through John McCain’s more recent experiences during a period in American politics when we have seen many of our most cherished attributes erode. John, with his collaborator Mark Salter, takes the reader through the periods when he ran for the highest office in this nation, President of the United States of America, during the 2000 and 2008 campaigns. He was at the forefront of America’s response to the terror attacks that brought down the twin towers in New York by entering a conflict that has continued for over 17 years. These ongoing experiences were the national context as Senator McCain fought the most challenging life experience one can face, a battle with glioblastoma that claimed his life but not his legacy.

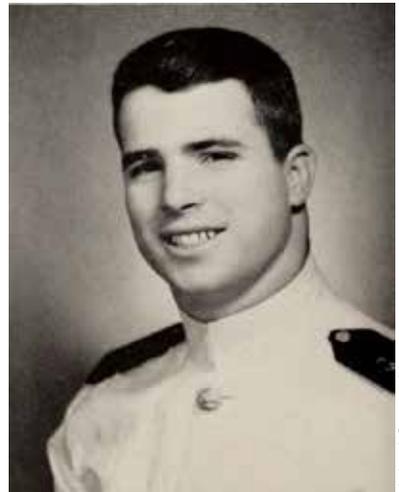
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The book begins with a chapter entitled “No Surrender.” It describes the experiences that were part of the 2008 presidential campaign when Senator McCain faced Senator Barack Obama for the presidency. He explains that many events conspired to make the election extremely difficult for him. First, he faced an extremely charismatic young candidate at a time when the country was tired of 7 years of war and our country was heading toward a financial crisis that demanded change. John details the events that led to “the surge” in Iraq which was designed to end a stalemate in the war. He conveys many stories about the experiences of the campaign including one where he stopped a woman who was disparaging candidate McCain’s opponent and complaining about him being “an Arab.” John responded with “No, Ma’am, he’s a decent family man and citizen whom I have disagreements with on fundamental issues. That’s what elections are for.” Later, President Obama said that John McCain was standing up for America’s character and values as much as for Obama’s. Senator McCain also talks about the decision in selecting Sarah Palin as his running mate, as well as how the sub-prime lending market impacted the elections. For those who lived through those times this is a great glimpse into things that are beyond our control but impact our life course.

In the chapter entitled “About Us,” John speaks in great detail about the use of “Enhanced Interrogation Techniques” (EIT) that were strongly supported by the Bush White House after the 9/11 attack. He explains in detail some of the techniques and methods used by our own nation on our enemies. He points out that it is also important to recognize how such activities impact on our standing as a nation of civility and moral character. How can we claim the moral high ground if we denigrate our foes? As a prisoner of war, one can only think that this might have brought back painful thoughts to the Naval Aviator and his own experience with EIT by his captors.

John invites the reader into many experiences in his voyage through some of his friendships in the political arena. In one chapter he explains that he is “a sucker for a fight” and discusses how some of these “led to friendships.” He laments how many of the senior senators were in another time 25 years removed from today. As a reviewer, it appears to me that Senator McCain puts forth the thesis that there is plenty of blame to go around on why we have devolved into “ideological ghettos” instead of arenas of informed discourse. One can only think that he would be pleased if we could return to a more respectful time when civil communication and informed logic were the order of the day. John mentions his disagreements with Ted Kennedy, “the liberal lion of the Senate;” and how he came to respect this political opponent. It is coincidental that Ted Kennedy succumbed to brain cancer and that John McCain has been taken from the nation by that same foe.



*John McCain  
USNA 1958*

John McCain discusses in other sections of this book his feelings about communism as well as American exceptionalism in support of human rights. This book is a journey through

one man's first-hand seat at the table of many events in recent history. Certainly, it has some areas that are hard to follow and require an understanding of current events to do it justice. Nonetheless, the book is a valuable journey and may help to inform the reader about where we are today, and some of the values we should work to bring back to our public discourse.

## Reflections

In reading this book and having seen the celebrations of the life of John McCain, I was provided with an opportunity to reflect on my own experiences in life and the places we might have intersected in this life's journey. As with Senator McCain and many others I am a Vietnam Veteran having served in the US Air Force as an enlisted man from 1967 through 1971. I entered the military the month that Senator McCain became a prisoner of the North Vietnamese. One year later to the day that I entered military service, I landed in Vietnam to fight in a war which I really did not fully understand as an eighteen-year-old recruit. I went because, at a young age, I was not ready for college. Service duty for my country seemed like the best option during a time when a draft existed in our nation. After completing my service, I went to work for the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. NIH is right across the street from what was then known as the Bethesda Naval Hospital where many wounded servicemen were patients when they returned from Vietnam with serious injuries. NIH conducts research to end debilitating diseases and disorders that impact on human life. Like Senator McCain, although at a much less public level, my career was one of public service with the intent of helping others lead better lives no matter what their ethnicity, gender, or political affiliation. This is really what should be the life's goal of any public servant, namely working for the benefit of others and doing so without complaint about salary or hours worked. I was lucky to work with some of the most wonderful and smartest people in the world, working to make the lives of others better.

As I reflect on my experiences and what we as a nation are going through during this time of great change, I think first about the norms that are being assailed. I think about what we recognize as leadership and how the values we look for in leaders are being questioned. Personally, I think a leader is not one that can "keep trains moving on time." A leader is not someone who simply eliminates legislatively passed programs by decree. A leader is an individual who provides people with a positive vision of a future that is inclusive of all. A leader is one who recognizes values such as respect for all and upholds the principles that underpin one's leadership position. People generally want an opportunity to succeed. By dividing people against one another that opportunity is lessened, not enhanced; and, we use others as a foil for our own failings.

Consider how things might be different; I think that what John McCain saw in his America was an ideal --- not a piece of land made of "blood and soil" but a collective of ideas, individuals, and beliefs in fairness. He wanted us to always strive for a more perfect nation that reflects basic human rights for all. I believe these are what has made and continues to make America the greatest nation in the world.

In thinking about how we have changed as a nation, I reflect on the fact that on many occasions when we are in dialogue or disagreement, we do not attack the message or position. Rather, we attack the deliverer of the message. By denigrating the person, we undermine the

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position, or so we think. I have always believed that really to change minds we must be willing to listen to others. Hopefully, John McCain through his passing and celebration has taught us such a lesson.

In my own life, I am proud to have a wonderful wife, two children and three grandchildren. I want them to have great success in their own life's quest. For them and for myself, I believe that it is our job to leave a better world for those who come after us.

Over the years I have become an executive coach and an advocate of leadership development. Most leadership theory stresses qualities of leaders and not a monetary scorecard as a measure of success. Many are now more interested in financial wealth as if that will make us happy. Do we become closer to our Maker (no matter how we worship) with more money --- or by being respectful of each other?

None of us is guaranteed an amount of time on this earth. In John McCain, we see an individual who lived a good life and appreciated "his journey." He said so specifically in this book. There is reason for each of us to think about our own life journey and conduct ourselves in a respectful manner toward both those that agree with us and those who may not. This book has led me to reflect on my own life very significantly. We are all blessed in one way or another. We should all work to contribute positively to a better nation that is respectful to all. Similarly, we must each acknowledge and accept that we are all responsible for both the positive and negative things that happen to enter our life. John McCain did so. He acknowledged his regrets as well as his successes. At his passing and in the celebration of his life, speakers eulogized that he fought for the "little guy" and that he supported dissidents wherever freedoms were under attack. Knowing how he could challenge others who did not share all these values, perhaps it is no wonder that, while many acknowledged the things he has done for our nation, a most unfortunate response from one foreign politician was, "The enemy is dead." Indeed, it is no wonder then that we celebrate Senator McCain for his service to our nation and its greatness, while some others find fault because he demonstrates how they are weak. Vietnam was a terrible war; and a place where John McCain suffered greatly. Yet he worked to normalize relations with his former adversaries. That is the kind of America I would like to see us become. And Senator McCain through his passing gives us all something to think about regarding who we are as individuals and who we are as a nation.

Like the title of this Journal itself, John McCain is the epitome of "health and human experiences."

## Conclusion

This book puts together the story of the political career of John McCain in the US Senate through his eyes. At the same time, it gives us a glimpse of his life. We generally see public figures in sound bites, and this book provides us with a deeper look at how one becomes the person they are. This book, along with recognition of the earlier parts of Senator McCain's illustrious career, provides us that deeper look. It also provides us with the thoughts of a man who accepted his own mortality and prepared for his own death. This book is especially valuable for those that have an interest in the events that have impacted our nation over the last 25 years from the perspective of a man sitting in the front row of many of these events.

Senator McCain was and will remain a great man --- perhaps the last of a dying breed? Perhaps there is another option. Perhaps in his passing and our celebration of his life, America will begin to implement the kind of change he desired all of this life – regular order through bi-partisanship.



*Senator McCain's Funeral at the United States Naval Academy  
September 2, 2018*