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Joseph McCarthy

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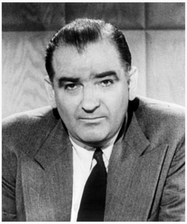
This article is about the U.S. Senator from Wisconsin (1947–1957). For other people named Joseph McCarthy, see Joseph McCarthy (disambiguation).

Joseph McCarthy



United States Senator from Wisconsin	
In office	
January 3, 1947 – May 2, 1957	
Preceded by	Robert M. La Follette Jr.
Succeeded by	William Proxmire
Personal details	
Born	Joseph Raymond McCarthy November 14, 1908 Grand Chute, Wisconsin, United States
Died	May 2, 1957 (aged 48) Bethesda, Maryland, United States
Resting place	Saint Mary's Cemetery Appleton, Wisconsin, United States
Political party	Republican (1944–1957)
Other political affiliations	Democratic (c. 1936–1944)
Spouse(s)	Jean Fraser Kerr Minetti (m. 1953)
Children	Tierney Elizabeth McCarthy
Alma mater	University of Wisconsin Marquette University Law School (LL.B.)
Profession	Attorney, judge, politician
Committees	Senate Committee on Government Operations

Joseph Raymond "Joe" McCarthy (November 14, 1908 – May 2, 1957) was an American politician who served as a U.S. Senator from the state of Wisconsin from 1947 until his death in 1957. Beginning in 1950, McCarthy became the most visible public face of a period in which Cold War tensions fueled fears of widespread Communist subversion.[1] He was noted for making claims that there were large numbers of Communists and Soviet spies and sympathizers inside the United States federal government and elsewhere. Ultimately, the controversy he generated led him to be censured by the United States Senate.

The term "McCarthyism", coined in 1950 in reference to McCarthy's practices, was soon applied to similar anti-communist activities. Today, the term is used by critics of McCarthy in reference to what they consider demagogic, reckless, and unsubstantiated accusations, as well as public attacks on the character or patriotism of political opponents.[2]

McCarthy was born in 1908 in the Town of Grand Chute in Outagamie County, Wisconsin, and attended Marquette University, studying different subjects before deciding on law and an LL.B. from Marquette University Law School.[3] At age 33, McCarthy volunteered for the United States Marine Corps and served during World War II. He successfully ran for the United States Senate in 1946, defeating Robert M. La Follette Jr. After three largely undistinguished years in the Senate, McCarthy rose suddenly to national fame in February 1950 when he asserted in a speech that he had a list of "members of the Communist Party and members of a spy ring" who were employed in the State Department.[4]

In succeeding years after his 1950 speech, McCarthy made additional accusations of Communist infiltration into the State Department, the administration of President Harry S. Truman, the Voice of America, and the United States Army. He also used various charges of communism, communist sympathies, disloyalty, or sex crimes to attack a number of politicians and other individuals inside and outside of government.[5]

McCarthy made various attempts to investigate, and hold accountable (as the practice was still against the law in many locations), persons whom he accused, or threatened to publicly accuse, of homosexuality. Former U.S. Senator Alan K. Simpson has written, "The so-called 'Red Scare' has been the main focus of most historians of that period of time. A lesser-known element... and one that harmed far more people was the "Lavender Scare",[6] a witch-hunt McCarthy and others conducted against homosexuals."[7] With the highly publicized Army–McCarthy hearings of 1954, and following the suicide of Wyoming Senator Lester C. Hunt that same year,[8] McCarthy's support and popularity faded. On December 2, 1954, the Senate voted to censure Senator

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עברית
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McCarthy by a vote of 67–22, making him one of the few senators ever to be disciplined in this fashion. McCarthy died at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland on May 2, 1957, at the age of 48. The official cause of death was acute hepatitis; some biographers say this was caused, or exacerbated, by alcoholism.[9]

Portfolio	Chairman for federal investigations of Communists in the U.S. government
Religion	Roman Catholicism
Awards	Distinguished Flying Cross
Signature	Joe McCarthy
Military service	
Nickname(s)	Low-Blow Joe Tail-Gunner Joe
Allegiance	United States
Service/branch	United States Marine Corps
Years of service	1942–45
Rank	Captain
Battles/wars	World War II

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Early life and career [edit]

McCarthy was born on a farm in the Town of Grand Chute, Wisconsin, near Appleton, the fifth of seven children.[10][11] His mother, Bridget Tierney, was from County Tipperary, Ireland. His father, Timothy McCarthy, was born in the United States, the son of an Irish father and a German mother. McCarthy dropped out of junior high school at age 14 to help his parents manage their farm. He entered Little Wolf High School, in Manawa, Wisconsin, when he was 20 and graduated in one year.[12]

McCarthy worked his way through college from 1930 to 1935, studying first engineering, then law, and receiving an LL.B. degree in 1935 from Marquette University Law School in Milwaukee.[13] He was admitted to the bar in 1935. While working at a law firm in Shawano, Wisconsin, he launched an unsuccessful campaign for district attorney as a Democrat in 1936. In 1939, McCarthy had better success when he ran for the nonpartisan elected post of 10th District circuit judge.[14][15] (During his years as an attorney, McCarthy made money on the side by gambling.)[16] McCarthy became the youngest circuit judge in the state's history by defeating incumbent Edgar V. Werner, who had been a judge for 24 years.[17] In the campaign, McCarthy exaggerated Werner's age of 66, claiming that he was 73, and so allegedly too old and infirm to handle the duties of his office.[18] Writing of Werner in *Reds: McCarthyism In Twentieth-Century America*, Ted Morgan wrote: "Pompous and condescending, he was disliked by lawyers. He had been reversed often by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, and he was so inefficient that he had piled up a huge backlog of cases."[19]

McCarthy's judicial career attracted some controversy because of the speed with which he dispatched many of his cases as he worked to clear the heavily backlogged docket he had inherited. Wisconsin had strict divorce laws, but when McCarthy heard divorce cases, he would expedite them whenever possible, and he made the needs of children involved in contested divorces a priority.[20] When it came to other cases argued before him, McCarthy compensated for his lack of experience as a jurist by demanding and relying heavily upon, precise briefs from the contesting attorneys. The Wisconsin Supreme Court reversed a low percentage of the cases he heard,[21] but he was also censured in 1941 for having lost evidence in a price fixing case.[22]

Military service [edit]

In 1942, shortly after the U.S. entered World War II, McCarthy was commissioned into the United States Marine Corps, despite the fact that his judicial office exempted him from compulsory service. His education qualified him for an automatic commission as an officer, and he became a second lieutenant after completing basic training. He served as an intelligence briefing officer for a dive bomber squadron in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville. McCarthy reportedly chose the Marines with the hope that being a veteran of this branch of the military would serve him best in his future political career.[23]

Joseph McCarthy in his U.S. Marine Corps uniform.

According to Morgan, writing in *Reds*, Joe's friend Urban P. Van Susteren, a lawyer, and later judge, whom McCarthy had named divorce counsel for Shawano County, and who had applied for active duty in the Army Air Force in early 1942, advised him: "Be a hero—join the Marines." When McCarthy seemed hesitant, Van Susteren asked, "You got shit in your blood?"[24] Van Susteren managed McCarthy's 1946 Senate campaign, and during McCarthy's Senate career he stayed with Van Susteren whenever he was in Appleton.[25][26]

McCarthy served 30 months as an intelligence officer (August 1942 -- February 1945), and he held the rank of captain by the time he was discharged in April 1945. He volunteered to fly twelve combat missions as a gunner-observer, acquiring (or perhaps giving himself) the nickname of "Tail-Gunner Joe" in the course of one of these missions.[27]

He later falsely claimed 32 aerial missions in order to qualify for a Distinguished Flying Cross, which he received in 1952. McCarthy also publicized a letter of commendation which he claimed had been signed by his commanding officer and countersigned by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, then Chief of Naval Operations. However, it was revealed that McCarthy had written this letter himself, in his capacity as intelligence officer. A "war wound" that McCarthy made the subject of varying stories involving airplane crashes or anti-aircraft fire was in fact received aboard ship during a ceremony for sailors crossing the equator for the first time.[28][29] Because of McCarthy's various lies about his military heroism, his "Tail-Gunner Joe" nickname was sarcastically used as a term of mockery by his critics.[30][31][32]

McCarthy campaigned for the Republican Senate nomination in Wisconsin while still on active duty in 1944 but was defeated for the GOP nomination by Alexander Wiley, the incumbent. He resigned his commission in April 1945, five months before the end of the Pacific war in September 1945. He was then reelected unopposed to his circuit court position, and began a much more systematic campaign for the 1946 Republican Senate primary nomination, with support from Thomas Coleman, the Republican Party's political boss in Wisconsin. In this race, he was challenging three-term senator Robert M. La Follette Jr., founder of the Wisconsin Progressive Party and son of the celebrated Wisconsin governor and senator Robert M. La Follette, Sr.

defeated for the GOP nomination by Alexander Wiley, the incumbent. He resigned his commission in April 1945, five months before the end of the Pacific war in September 1945. He was then reelected unopposed to his circuit court position, and began a much more systematic campaign for the 1946 Republican Senate primary nomination, with support from Thomas

Senate campaign [edit]

In his campaign, McCarthy attacked La Follette for not enlisting during the war, although La Follette had been 46 when Pearl Harbor was bombed. He also claimed La Follette had made huge profits from his investments while he, McCarthy, had been away fighting for his country. In fact, McCarthy had invested in the stock market himself during the war, netting a profit of $42,000 in 1943. La Follette's investments consisted of partial interest in a radio station, which earned him a profit of $47,000 over two years.[33]

The suggestion that La Follette had been guilty of war profiteering was deeply damaging, and McCarthy won the primary nomination 207,935 votes to 202,557. It was during this campaign that McCarthy started publicizing his war-time nickname "Tail-Gunner Joe", using the slogan, "Congress needs a tail-gunner". Arnold Beichman later stated that McCarthy "was elected to his first term in the Senate with support from the Communist-controlled United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, CIO", which preferred McCarthy to the anti-communist Robert M. La Follette.[34] In the general election against Democratic opponent Howard J. McMurray, McCarthy won 61.2% to Democrat McMurray's 37.3%, and thus joined Senator Wiley, whom he had challenged unsuccessfully two years earlier, in the Senate.

Wisconsin U.S. Senate Election, 1946

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
🟥 Republican	Joseph McCarthy	620,430	61.2
🟦 Democratic	Howard McMurray	378,772	37.3
	Total votes	**999,202**	**98.5**
🟥 Republican **hold**			

United States Senate [edit]

Senator McCarthy's first three years in the Senate were unremarkable. McCarthy was a popular speaker, invited by many different organizations, covering a wide range of topics. His aides and many in the Washington social circle described him as charming and friendly, and he was a popular guest at cocktail parties. He was far less well liked among fellow senators, however, who found him quick-tempered and prone to impatience and even rage. Outside of a small circle of colleagues, he was soon an isolated figure in the Senate.[35]

He was active in labor-management issues, with a reputation as a moderate Republican. He fought against continuation of wartime price controls, especially on sugar. His advocacy in this area was associated by critics with a $20,000 personal loan McCarthy received from a Pepsi bottling executive, earning the Senator the derisive nickname "The Pepsi-Cola Kid".[36] He supported the Taft–Hartley Act over Truman's veto, angering labor unions in Wisconsin but solidifying his business base.[37]

In an incident for which he would be widely criticized, McCarthy lobbied for the commutation of death sentences given to a group of Waffen-SS soldiers convicted of war crimes for carrying out the 1944 Malmedy massacre of American prisoners of war. McCarthy was critical of the convictions because of allegations of torture during the interrogations that led to the German soldiers' confessions. He charged that the U.S. Army was engaged in a coverup of judicial misconduct, but never presented any evidence to support the accusation.[38] Shortly after this, a poll of the Senate press corps voted McCarthy "the worst U.S. senator" currently in office.[39]

Wheeling speech [edit]

McCarthy experienced a meteoric rise in national profile on February 9, 1950, when he gave a Lincoln Day speech to the Republican Women's Club of Wheeling, West Virginia. His words in the speech are a matter of some debate, as no audio recording was saved. However, it is generally agreed that he produced a piece of paper that he claimed contained a list of known Communists working for the State Department. McCarthy is usually quoted to have said: "The State Department is infested with communists. I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department."[40][41]

There is some dispute about whether or not McCarthy actually gave the number of people on the list as being "205" or "57". In a later telegram to President Truman, and when entering the speech into the Congressional Record, he used the number 57.[42] The origin of the number 205 can be traced: in later debates on the Senate floor, McCarthy referred to a 1946 letter that then–Secretary of State James Byrnes sent to Congressman Adolph J. Sabath. In that letter, Byrnes said State Department security investigations had resulted in "recommendation against permanent employment" for 284 persons, and that 79 of these had been removed from their jobs; this left 205 still on the State Department's payroll. In fact, by the time of McCarthy's speech only about 65 of the employees mentioned in the Byrnes letter were still with the State Department, and all of these had undergone further security checks.[43]

At the time of McCarthy's speech, communism was a significant concern in the United States. This concern was exacerbated by the actions of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, the victory of the communists in the Chinese Civil War, the Soviets' development of a nuclear weapon the year before, and by the contemporary controversy surrounding Alger Hiss and the confession of Soviet spy Klaus Fuchs. With this background and due to the sensational nature of McCarthy's charge against the State Department, the Wheeling speech soon attracted a flood of press interest in McCarthy's claim.

Tydings Committee [edit]

McCarthy himself was taken aback by the massive media response to the Wheeling speech, and he was accused of continually revising both his charges and figures. In Salt Lake City, Utah, a few days later, he cited a figure of 57, and in the Senate on February 20, he claimed 81.[*citation needed*] During a five-hour speech,[44] McCarthy presented a case-by-case analysis of his 81 "loyalty risks" employed at the State Department. It is widely accepted that most of McCarthy's cases were selected from the so-called "Lee list", a report that had been compiled three years earlier for the House Appropriations Committee. Led by a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent named Robert E. Lee, the House investigators had reviewed security clearance documents on State Department employees, and had determined that there were "incidents of inefficiencies"[45] in the security reviews of 108 employees. McCarthy hid the source of his list, stating that he had penetrated the "iron curtain" of State Department secrecy with the aid of "some good, loyal Americans in the State Department".[46] In reciting the information from the Lee list cases, McCarthy consistently exaggerated, representing the hearsay of witnesses as facts and converting phrases such as "inclined towards Communism" to "a Communist".[47]

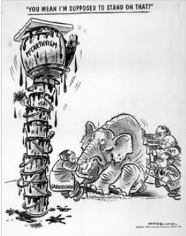
In response to McCarthy's charges, the Senate voted unanimously to investigate, and the Tydings Committee hearings were called.[48] This was a subcommittee of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations set up in February 1950 to conduct "a full and complete study and investigation as to whether persons who are disloyal to the United States are, or have been, employed by the Department of State".[49] Many Democrats were incensed at McCarthy's attack on the State Department of a Democratic administration, and had hoped to use the hearings to discredit him. The Democratic chairman of the subcommittee, Senator Millard Tydings, was reported to have said, "Let me have him [McCarthy] for three days in public hearings, and he'll never show his face in the Senate again."[50]

Senator Millard Tydings

During the hearings, McCarthy moved on from his original unnamed Lee list cases and used the hearings to make charges against nine specific people: Dorothy Kenyon, Esther Brunauer, Haldore Hanson, Gustavo Durán, Owen Lattimore, Harlow Shapley, Frederick Schuman, John S. Service, and Philip Jessup. Some of them no longer worked for the State Department, or never had; all had previously been the subject of charges of varying worth and validity. Owen Lattimore became a particular focus of McCarthy's, who at one point described him as a "top Russian spy". Throughout the hearings, McCarthy employed colorful rhetoric, but produced no substantial evidence, to support his accusations.[*citation needed*]

From its beginning, the Tydings Committee was marked by partisan infighting. Its final report, written by the Democratic majority, concluded that the individuals on McCarthy's list were neither Communists nor pro-communist, and said the State Department had an effective security program. The Tydings Report labeled McCarthy's charges a "fraud and a hoax", and said that the result of McCarthy's actions was to "confuse and divide the American people [...] to a degree far beyond the hopes of the Communists themselves". Republicans responded in kind, with William E. Jenner stating that Tydings was guilty of "the most brazen whitewash of treasonable conspiracy in our history".[51] The full Senate voted three times on whether to accept the report, and each time the voting was precisely divided along party lines.[52]

Fame, notoriety, and personal life [edit]


"YOU MEAN I'M SUPPOSED TO STAND ON THAT?"
McCARTHYISM
GABRIELSON
TAFT
Herbert Block, who signed his work "Herblock", coined the term "McCarthyism" in this cartoon in the March 29, 1950, *Washington Post*.

From 1950 onward, McCarthy continued to exploit the fear of Communism and to press his accusations that the government was failing to deal with Communism within its ranks. McCarthy also began investigations into the numerous homosexuals working in the foreign policy bureaucracy, who were considered prime candidates for blackmail by the Soviets.[53] These accusations received wide publicity, increased his approval rating, and gained him a powerful national following.

"In Congress, there was little doubt that homosexuals did not belong in sensitive government positions."[53] Since the late 1940s, the government had been dismissing about five homosexuals a month from civilian posts; by 1954, the number had grown twelve-fold.[54] "Mixed in with the hysterics were some logic, though: homosexuals faced condemnation and discrimination, and most of them—wishing to conceal their orientation--were vulnerable to blackmail."[55] DCI Roscoe Hillenkoetter was called to Congress to testify on homosexuals being employed at the CIA. He said, "The use of homosexuals as a control mechanism over individuals recruited for espionage is a generally accepted technique which has been used at least on a limited basis for many years." As soon as the DCI said these words, his aide signaled to take the remainder of the DCI's testimony off the record. Political historian David Barrett uncovered Hillenkoetter's notes, which reveal the remainder of the statement: "While this agency will never employ homosexuals on its rolls, it might conceivably be necessary, and in the past has actually been valuable, to use known homosexuals as agents in the field. I am certain that if Josef Stalin or a member of the Politburo or a high satellite official were known to be a homosexual, no member of this committee or of the Congress would balk against our use of any technique to penetrate their operations... after all, intelligence and espionage is, at best, an extremely dirty business."[56] The Senators reluctantly agreed the CIA had to be flexible.[57]

McCarthy's methods also brought on the disapproval and opposition of many. Barely a month after McCarthy's Wheeling speech, the term "McCarthyism" was coined by *Washington Post* cartoonist Herbert Block. Block and others used the word as a synonym for demagoguery, baseless defamation, and mudslinging. Later, it would be embraced by McCarthy and some of his supporters. "McCarthyism is Americanism with its sleeves rolled," McCarthy said in a 1952 speech, and later that year he published a book titled *McCarthyism: The Fight For America*.

McCarthy has been accused of attempting to discredit his critics and political opponents by accusing them of being Communists or communist sympathizers. In the 1950 Maryland Senate election, McCarthy campaigned for John Marshall Butler in his race against four-term incumbent Millard Tydings, with whom McCarthy had been in conflict during the Tydings Committee hearings. In speeches supporting Butler, McCarthy accused Tydings of "protecting Communists" and "shielding traitors". McCarthy's staff was heavily involved in the campaign, and collaborated in the production of a campaign tabloid that contained a composite photograph doctored to make it appear that Tydings was in intimate conversation with Communist leader Earl Russell Browder.[58][59][60] A Senate subcommittee later investigated this election and referred to it as "a despicable, back-street type of campaign", as well as recommending that the use of defamatory literature in a campaign be made grounds for expulsion from the Senate.[61] The pamphlet was clearly labeled a composite. McCarthy said it was "wrong" to distribute it; though staffer Jean Kerr thought it was fine. After his election defeat, Tydings claimed foul play (he had lost by almost 40,000 votes), however, his reelection campaign was in trouble before Tydings butted heads with McCarthy: Tydings was the highly visible chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and had some responsibility for the lack of preparedness for the Korean campaign, he was increasingly unpopular with African-American voters because of his support for Jim Crow laws, and McCarthy and anti-communism were popular with Maryland's Catholic voters at election time.[28]

In addition to the Tydings–Butler race, McCarthy campaigned for several other Republicans in the 1950 elections, including Everett Dirksen against Democratic incumbent and Senate Majority Leader Scott W. Lucas. Dirksen, and indeed all the candidates McCarthy supported, won their elections, and those he opposed lost. The elections, including many that McCarthy was not involved in, were an overall Republican sweep. Although his impact on the elections was unclear, McCarthy was credited as a key Republican campaigner. He was now regarded as one of the most powerful men in the Senate and was treated with new-found deference by his colleagues.[62] In the 1952 Senate elections McCarthy was returned to his Senate seat with 54.2% of the vote, compared to Democrat Thomas Fairchild's 45.6%.

Wisconsin U.S. Senate Election, 1952

Party		Candidate	Votes	%
🟥	Republican	Joseph McCarthy	870,444	54.2
🟦	Democratic	Thomas E. Fairchild	731,402	45.6

In 1950 McCarthy assaulted journalist Drew Pearson in the cloakroom of a Washington club, reportedly kneeing him in the groin. McCarthy, who admitted the assault, claimed he merely "slapped" Pearson.[63] In 1952, using rumors collected by Pearson, Nevada publisher Hank Greenspun wrote that McCarthy was a homosexual. The major journalistic media refused to print the story, and no notable McCarthy biographer has accepted the rumor as probable.[64] In 1953, McCarthy married Jean Kerr, a researcher in his office. He and his wife adopted a baby girl, whom they named Tierney Elizabeth McCarthy, in January 1957.

McCarthy and the Truman administration [edit]

McCarthy and President Truman clashed often during the years both held office. McCarthy characterized Truman and the Democratic Party as soft on, or even in league with, Communists, and spoke of the Democrats' "twenty years of treason". Truman, in turn, once referred to McCarthy as "the best asset the Kremlin has", calling McCarthy's actions an attempt to "sabotage the foreign policy of the United States" in a cold war and comparing it to shooting American soldiers in the back in a hot war.[65] It was the Truman Administration's State Department that McCarthy accused of harboring 205 (or 57 or 81) "known Communists". Truman's Secretary of Defense, George Catlett Marshall, was the target of some of McCarthy's most vitriolic rhetoric. Marshall had been Army Chief of Staff during World War II and was also Truman's former Secretary of State. Marshall was a highly respected General and statesman, remembered today as the architect of victory and peace, the latter based on the Marshall Plan for post-war reconstruction of Europe, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. McCarthy made a lengthy speech on Marshall, later published in 1951 as a book titled *America's Retreat From Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall*. Marshall had been involved in American foreign policy with China, and McCarthy charged that Marshall was directly responsible for the loss of China to Communism. In the speech McCarthy also implied that Marshall was guilty of treason;[66] declared that "if Marshall were merely stupid, the laws of probability would dictate that part of his decisions would serve this country's interest";[66] and most famously, accused him of being part of "a conspiracy so immense and an infamy so black as to dwarf any previous venture in the history of man".[66]

During the Korean War, when President Truman dismissed General Douglas MacArthur, McCarthy charged that Truman and his advisors must have planned the dismissal during late-night sessions when "they've had time to get the President cheerful" on bourbon and Bénédictine. McCarthy declared, "The son of a bitch should be impeached."[67]

Support from Roman Catholics and the Kennedy Family [edit]

One of the strongest bases of anti-Communist sentiment in the United States was the Catholic community, which constituted over 20% of the national vote. McCarthy identified himself as Catholic, and although the great majority of Catholics were Democrats, as his fame as a leading anti-Communist grew, he became popular in Catholic communities across the country, with strong support from many leading Catholics, diocesan newspapers, and Catholic journals.[68] At the same time, some Catholics did oppose McCarthy, notably the anti-Communist author Father John Francis Cronin and the influential journal *Commonweal*.[69]

McCarthy established a bond with the powerful Kennedy family, which had high visibility among Catholics. McCarthy became a close friend of Joseph P. Kennedy Sr., himself a fervent anti-Communist, and was a frequent guest at the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port. He dated two of Kennedy's daughters, Patricia and Eunice,[70][71] and was godfather to Robert F. Kennedy's first child, Kathleen Kennedy. Robert Kennedy was chosen by McCarthy as a counsel for his investigatory committee, but resigned after six months due to disagreements with McCarthy and committee Counsel Roy Marcus Cohn. Joseph Kennedy had a national network of contacts and became a vocal supporter, building McCarthy's popularity among Catholics and making sizable contributions to McCarthy's campaigns.[72] The Kennedy patriarch hoped that one of his sons would be president. Mindful of the anti-Catholic prejudice Al Smith faced during his 1928 campaign for that office, Joseph Kennedy supported McCarthy as a national Catholic politician who might pave the way for a younger Kennedy's presidential candidacy.

Unlike many Democrats, John F. Kennedy, who served in the Senate with McCarthy from 1953 until the latter's death in 1957, never attacked McCarthy. McCarthy had refused to campaign for Kennedy's 1952 opponent, Republican incumbent Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., due to his friendship with the Kennedys.[73] When a speaker at a February 1952 final club dinner stated that he was glad McCarthy had not attended Harvard College, an angry Kennedy jumped up, denounced the speaker, and left the event.[74] Asked by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. why he avoided criticism of McCarthy, Kennedy said, "Hell, half my voters in Massachusetts look on McCarthy as a hero."[75]

McCarthy and Eisenhower [edit]

During the 1952 presidential election, the Eisenhower campaign toured Wisconsin with McCarthy. In a speech delivered in Green Bay, Eisenhower declared that while he agreed with McCarthy's goals, he disagreed with his methods. In draft versions of his speech, Eisenhower had also included a strong defense of his mentor, George Marshall, which was a direct rebuke of McCarthy's frequent attacks. However, under the advice of conservative colleagues who were fearful that Eisenhower could lose Wisconsin if he alienated McCarthy supporters, he deleted this defense from later versions of his speech.[76][77] The deletion was discovered by William H. Laurence, a reporter for *The New York Times*, and featured on its front page the next day. Eisenhower was widely criticized for giving up his personal convictions, and the incident became the low point of his campaign.[76]

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States

With his victory in the 1952 presidential race, Dwight Eisenhower became the first Republican president in 20 years. The Republican party also held a majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate. After being elected president, Eisenhower made it clear to those close to him that he did not approve of McCarthy and he worked actively to diminish his power and influence. Still, he never directly confronted McCarthy or criticized him by name in any speech, thus perhaps prolonging McCarthy's power by giving the impression that even the President was afraid to criticize him directly. Oshinsky disputes this, stating that "Eisenhower was known as a harmonizer, a man who could get diverse factions to work toward a common goal. ... Leadership, he explained, meant patience and conciliation, not 'hitting people over the head'."[78]

McCarthy won reelection in 1952 with 54% of the vote, defeating former Wisconsin State Attorney General Thomas E. Fairchild but badly trailing a Republican ticket which swept the state of Wisconsin; all the other Republican winners, including Eisenhower himself, received at least 60% of the Wisconsin vote.[79] Those who expected that party loyalty would cause McCarthy to tone down his accusations of Communists being harbored within the government were soon disappointed. Eisenhower had never been an admirer of McCarthy, and their relationship became more hostile once Eisenhower was in office. In a November 1953 speech that was carried on national television, McCarthy began by praising the Eisenhower Administration for removing "1,456 Truman holdovers who were ... gotten rid of because of Communist connections and activities or perversion". He then went on to complain that John Paton Davies Jr. was still "on the payroll after eleven months of the Eisenhower Administration", even though Davies had actually been dismissed three weeks earlier, and repeated an unsubstantiated accusation that Davies had tried to "put Communists and espionage agents in key spots in the Central Intelligence Agency". In the same speech, he criticized Eisenhower for not doing enough to secure the release of missing American pilots shot down over China during the Korean War.[80] By the end of 1953, McCarthy had altered the "twenty years of treason" catchphrase he had coined for the preceding Democratic administrations and began referring to "twenty-*one* years of treason" to include Eisenhower's first year in office.[81]

As McCarthy became increasingly combative towards the Eisenhower Administration, Eisenhower faced repeated calls that he confront McCarthy directly. Eisenhower refused, saying privately "nothing would please him [McCarthy] more than to get the publicity that would be generated by a public repudiation by the President."[82] On several occasions Eisenhower is reported to have said of McCarthy that he did not want to "get down in the gutter with that guy".[83]

Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations [edit]

With the beginning of his second term as senator in 1953, McCarthy was made chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations. According to some reports, Republican leaders were growing wary of McCarthy's methods and gave him this relatively mundane panel rather than the Internal Security Subcommittee—the committee normally involved with investigating Communists—thus putting McCarthy "where he can't do any harm", in the words of Senate Majority Leader Robert A. Taft.[84] However, the Committee on Government Operations included the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and the mandate of this subcommittee was sufficiently flexible to allow McCarthy to use it for his own investigations of Communists in the government. McCarthy appointed Roy Cohn as chief counsel and 27-year-old Robert F. Kennedy as an assistant counsel to the subcommittee.

This subcommittee would be the scene of some of McCarthy's most publicized exploits. When the records of the closed executive sessions of the subcommittee under McCarthy's chairmanship were made public in 2003–04,[85] Senators Susan

Collins and Carl Levin wrote the following in their preface to the documents:

> Senator McCarthy's zeal to uncover subversion and espionage led to disturbing excesses. His browbeating tactics destroyed careers of people who were not involved in the infiltration of our government. His freewheeling style caused both the Senate and the Subcommittee to revise the rules governing future investigations, and prompted the courts to act to protect the Constitutional rights of witnesses at Congressional hearings. ... These hearings are a part of our national past that we can neither afford to forget nor permit to reoccur.[86]

The subcommittee first investigated allegations of Communist influence in the Voice of America, at that time administered by the State Department's United States Information Agency. Many VOA personnel were questioned in front of television cameras and a packed press gallery, with McCarthy lacing his questions with hostile innuendo and false accusations.[87] A few VOA employees alleged Communist influence on the content of broadcasts, but none of the charges were substantiated. Morale at VOA was badly damaged, and one of its engineers committed suicide during McCarthy's investigation. Ed Kretzman, a policy advisor for the service, would later comment that it was VOA's "darkest hour when Senator McCarthy and his chief hatchet man, Roy Cohn, almost succeeded in muffling it".[87]

The subcommittee then turned to the overseas library program of the International Information Agency. Cohn toured Europe examining the card catalogs of the State Department libraries looking for works by authors he deemed inappropriate. McCarthy then recited the list of supposedly pro-communist authors before his subcommittee and the press. The State Department bowed to McCarthy and ordered its overseas librarians to remove from their shelves "material by any controversial persons, Communists, fellow travelers, etc." Some libraries went as far as burning the newly forbidden books.[88] Shortly after this, in one of his carefully oblique public criticisms of McCarthy, President Eisenhower urged Americans: "Don't join the book burners. ... Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book."[89]

Soon after receiving the chair to the Subcommittee on Investigations, McCarthy appointed Joseph Brown Matthews (generally known as J. B. Matthews) as staff director of the subcommittee. One of the nation's foremost anti-communists, Matthews had formerly been staff director for the House Un-American Activities Committee. The appointment became controversial when it was learned that Matthews had recently written an article titled "Reds and Our Churches",[90][91] which opened with the sentence, "The largest single group supporting the Communist apparatus in the United States is composed of Protestant Clergymen." A group of senators denounced this "shocking and unwarranted attack against the American clergy" and demanded that McCarthy dismiss Matthews. McCarthy initially refused to do this but as the controversy mounted, and the majority of his own subcommittee joined the call for Matthews' ouster, McCarthy finally yielded and accepted his resignation. For some McCarthy opponents, this was a signal defeat of the senator, showing he was not as invincible as he had formerly seemed.[92]

Investigating the Army [edit]

In autumn 1953, McCarthy's committee began its ill-fated inquiry into the United States Army. This began with McCarthy opening an investigation into the Army Signal Corps laboratory at Fort Monmouth. McCarthy, newly married to Jean Kerr, cut short his honeymoon to open the investigation. He garnered some headlines with stories of a dangerous spy ring among the Army researchers, but after weeks of hearings, nothing came of his investigations.[93] Unable to expose any signs of subversion, McCarthy focused instead on the case of Irving Peress, a New York dentist who had been drafted into the Army in 1952 and promoted to major in November 1953. Shortly thereafter it came to the attention of the military bureaucracy that Peress, who was a member of the left-wing American Labor Party, had declined to answer questions about his political affiliations on a loyalty-review form. Peress' superiors were therefore ordered to discharge him from the Army within 90 days. McCarthy subpoenaed Peress to appear before his subcommittee on January 30, 1954. Peress refused to answer McCarthy's questions, citing his rights under the Fifth Amendment. McCarthy responded by sending a message to Secretary of the Army, Robert T. Stevens, demanding that Peress be court-martialed. On that same day, Peress asked for his pending discharge from the Army to be effected immediately, and the next day Brigadier General Ralph W. Zwicker, his commanding officer at Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, gave him an honorable separation from the Army. At McCarthy's encouragement, "Who promoted Peress?" became a rallying cry among many anti-communists and McCarthy supporters. In fact, and as McCarthy knew, Peress had been promoted automatically through the provisions of the Doctor Draft Law, for which McCarthy had voted.[94]

Army–McCarthy hearings [edit]

Main article: Army–McCarthy hearings

Early in 1954, the U.S. Army accused McCarthy and his chief counsel, Roy Cohn, of improperly pressuring the Army to give favorable treatment to G. David Schine, a former aide to McCarthy and a friend of Cohn's, who was then serving in the Army as a private.[95] McCarthy claimed that the accusation was made in bad faith, in retaliation for his questioning of Zwicker the previous year. The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, usually chaired by McCarthy himself, was given the task of adjudicating these conflicting charges. Republican Senator Karl Mundt was appointed to chair the committee, and the Army–McCarthy hearings convened on April 22, 1954.[*citation needed*]

McCarthy chats with Roy Cohn (right) at the Army-McCarthy hearings.

The Army consulted with an attorney familiar with McCarthy to determine the best approach to attacking him. Based on his recommendation, it decided not to pursue McCarthy on the issue of communists in government: "The attorney feels it is almost impossible to counter McCarthy effectively on the issue of kicking Communists out of Government, because he generally has some basis, no matter how slight, for his claim of Communist connection."[28]

The hearings lasted for 36 days and were broadcast on live television by ABC and DuMont, with an estimated 20 million viewers. After hearing 32 witnesses and two million words of testimony, the committee concluded that McCarthy himself had not exercised any improper influence on Schine's behalf, but that Cohn had engaged in "unduly persistent or aggressive efforts". The committee also concluded that Army Secretary Robert Stevens and Army Counsel John Adams "made efforts to terminate or influence the investigation and hearings at Fort Monmouth", and that Adams "made vigorous and diligent efforts" to block subpoenas for members of the Army Loyalty and Screening Board "by means of personal appeal to certain members of the [McCarthy] committee".[*citation needed*]

Of far greater importance to McCarthy than the committee's inconclusive final report was the negative effect that the extensive exposure had on his popularity. Many in the audience saw him as bullying, reckless, and dishonest, and the daily newspaper summaries of the hearings were also frequently unfavorable.[96][97] Late in the hearings, Senator Stuart Symington made an angry and prophetic remark to McCarthy, upon being told by McCarthy that "You're not fooling anyone": "Senator, the American people have had a look at you now for six weeks; you're not fooling anyone, either."[98] In Gallup polls of January 1954, 50% of those polled had a positive opinion of McCarthy. In June, that number had fallen to 34%. In the same polls, those with a negative opinion of McCarthy increased from 29% to 45%.[99]

An increasing number of Republicans and conservatives were coming to see McCarthy as a liability to the party and to anti-communism. Congressman George H. Bender noted, "There is a growing impatience with the Republican Party. McCarthyism has become a synonym for witch-hunting, Star Chamber methods, and the denial of ... civil liberties."[100] Frederick Woltman, a reporter with a long-standing reputation as a staunch anti-communist, wrote a five-part series of articles criticizing McCarthy in the *New York World-Telegram*. He stated that McCarthy "has become a major liability to the cause of anti-communism", and accused him of "wild twisting of facts and near facts [that] repels authorities in the field".[101][102]

The most famous incident in the hearings was an exchange between McCarthy and the army's chief legal representative, Joseph Nye Welch. On June 9, the 30th day of the hearings, Welch challenged Roy Cohn to provide U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell Jr. with McCarthy's list of 130 Communists or subversives in defense plants "before the sun goes down". McCarthy stepped in and said that if Welch was so concerned about persons aiding the Communist Party, he should check on a man in his Boston law office named Fred Fisher, who had once belonged to the National Lawyers Guild, a progressive lawyers association.[103] In an impassioned defense of Fisher, Welch responded, "Until this moment, Senator, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness ..." When McCarthy resumed his attack, Welch interrupted him: "Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?" When McCarthy once again persisted, Welch cut him off and demanded the chairman "call the next witness". At that point, the gallery erupted in applause and a recess was called.[104]

Joseph N. Welch (left) being questioned by Senator McCarthy, June 9, 1954.

Edward R. Murrow, *See It Now* [edit]

Even before Welch asked McCarthy, "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last?" in the hearings, one of the most prominent attacks on McCarthy's methods was an episode of the television documentary series *See It Now*, hosted by journalist Edward R. Murrow, which was broadcast on March 9, 1954. Titled "A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy", the episode consisted largely of clips of McCarthy speaking. In these clips, McCarthy accuses the Democratic party of "twenty years of treason", describes the American Civil Liberties Union as "listed as 'a front for, and doing the work of', the Communist Party",[105] and berates and harangues various witnesses, including General Zwicker.[*citation needed*]

In his conclusion, Murrow said of McCarthy:

> No one familiar with the history of this country can deny that congressional committees are useful. It is necessary to investigate before legislating, but the line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one, and the junior Senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly. His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind, as between the internal and the external threats of Communism. We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in

Edward R. Murrow, pioneer in broadcast journalism.

> fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men—not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.
>
> This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, wherever it continues to exist in the world, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home.
>
> The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."[106]

The following week *See It Now* ran another episode critical of McCarthy, this one focusing on the case of Annie Lee Moss, an African-American army clerk who was the target of one of McCarthy's investigations. The Murrow shows, together with the televised Army–McCarthy hearings of the same year, were the major causes of a nationwide popular opinion backlash against McCarthy, in part because for the first time his statements were being publicly challenged by noteworthy figures. To counter the negative publicity, McCarthy appeared on *See It Now* on April 6, 1954, and made a number of charges against the popular Murrow, including the accusation that he colluded with VOKS, the "Russian espionage and propaganda organization".[107] This response did not go over well with viewers, and the result was a further decline in McCarthy's popularity.[*citation needed*]

According to popular historian Arthur Herman, Murrow's staff edited the film to show McCarthy behaving in an unflattering way. Herman quotes John Cogley of *Commonweal*, a McCarthy critic, as stating, "A totally different selection of film would turn McCarthy into a man on a shining white steed—infinitely reasonable, burdened with the onus of single-handedly cleaning out subversives in the face of violent criticism." and that Murrow used "partial truth and innuendo".[108]

The "Joe Must Go" recall attempt [edit]

On March 18, 1954 *Sauk-Prairie Star* editor Leroy Gore of Sauk City, Wisconsin urged the recall of McCarthy in a front page editorial that ran alongside a sample petition that readers could fill out and mail to the newspaper. A Republican and former McCarthy supporter, Gore cited the senator with subverting President Eisenhower's authority, disrespecting Wisconsin's-own Gen. Ralph Wise Zwicker and ignoring the plight of Wisconsin dairy farmers faced with price-slashing surpluses.

Despite critics' claims that a recall attempt was foolhardy, the "Joe Must Go" movement caught fire and was backed by a diverse coalition including other Republican leaders, Democrats, businessmen, farmers and students. Wisconsin's constitution stipulates the number of signatures needed to force a recall election must exceed one-quarter the number of voters in the most recent gubernatorial election, requiring the anti-McCarthy movement to gather some 404,000 signatures in sixty days. With little support from organized labor or the state Democratic Party, the roughly organized recall effort attracted national attention, particularly during the concurrent Army-McCarthy hearings.

Following the deadline of June 5, the final number of signatures was never determined because the petitions were sent out of state to avoid a subpoena from the Sauk County district attorney, an ardent McCarthy supporter who was investigating the leaders of the recall campaign on the grounds that they had violated Wisconsin's Corrupt Practices Act. Chicago newspapermen later tallied 335,000 names while another 50,000 were said to be hidden in Minneapolis, with other lists buried on Sauk County farms.[109]

Public opinion [edit]

McCarthy's Support in Gallup Polls[110]

Date	Favorable	No Opinion	Unfavorable	Net Favorable
1951 August	15	63	22	−7
1953 April	19	59	22	−3
1953 June	35	35	30	+5
1953 August	34	24	42	−8
1954 January	50	21	29	+21
1954 March	46	18	36	+10
1954 April	38	16	46	−8
1954 May	35	16	49	−14
1954 June	34	21	45	−11
1954 August	36	13	51	−15
1954 November	35	19	46	−11

Censure and the Watkins Committee [edit]

Several members of the U.S. Senate had opposed McCarthy well before 1953. Senator Margaret Chase Smith, a Maine Republican, delivered her "Declaration of Conscience" on June 1, 1950, calling for an end to the use of smear tactics without mentioning McCarthy or anyone else by name. Six other Republican Senators – Wayne Morse, Irving Ives, Charles W. Tobey, Edward John Thye, George Aiken, and Robert C. Hendrickson – joined her in condemning McCarthy's tactics. McCarthy referred to Smith and her fellow Senators as "Snow White and the six dwarfs".[111]

Senator Ralph Flanders, who introduced the resolution calling for McCarthy to be censured

On March 9, 1954, Vermont Republican Senator Ralph E. Flanders gave a humor-laced speech on the Senate floor, questioning McCarthy's tactics in fighting communism, likening McCarthyism to "housecleaning" with "much clatter and hullabaloo". He recommended that McCarthy turn his attention to the worldwide encroachment of Communism outside North America.[112][113] In a June 1 speech, Flanders compared McCarthy to Adolf Hitler, accusing him of spreading "division and confusion" and saying, "Were the Junior Senator from Wisconsin in the pay of the Communists he could not have done a better job for them."[114] On June 11, Flanders introduced a resolution to have McCarthy removed as chair of his committees. Although there were many in the Senate who believed that some sort of disciplinary action against McCarthy was warranted, there was no clear majority supporting this resolution. Some of the resistance was due to concern about usurping the Senate's rules regarding committee chairs and seniority. Flanders next introduced a resolution to censure McCarthy. The resolution was initially written without any reference to particular actions or misdeeds on McCarthy's part. As Flanders put it, "It was not his breaches of etiquette, or of rules or sometimes even of laws which is so disturbing," but rather his overall pattern of behavior. Ultimately a "bill of particulars" listing 46 charges was added to the censure resolution. A special committee, chaired by Senator Arthur Vivian Watkins, was appointed to study and evaluate the resolution. This committee opened hearings on August 31.[115]

Senator Arthur V. Watkins

After two months of hearings and deliberations, the Watkins Committee recommended that McCarthy be censured on two of the 46 counts: his contempt of the Subcommittee on Rules and Administration, which had called him to testify in 1951 and 1952, and his abuse of General Zwicker in 1954. The Zwicker count was dropped by the full Senate on the grounds that McCarthy's conduct was arguably "induced" by Zwicker's own behavior. In place of this count, a new one was drafted regarding McCarthy's statements about the Watkins Committee itself.[116]

The two counts on which the Senate ultimately voted were:

- That McCarthy had "failed to cooperate with the Subcommittee on Rules and Administration", and "repeatedly abused the members who were trying to carry out assigned duties ..."
- That McCarthy had charged "three members of the [Watkins] Select Committee with 'deliberate deception' and 'fraud' ... that the special Senate session ... was a 'lynch party' ", and had characterized the committee "as the 'unwitting handmaiden', 'involuntary agent' and 'attorneys in fact' of the Communist Party", and had "acted contrary to senatorial ethics and tended to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute, to obstruct the constitutional processes of the Senate, and to impair its dignity".[117]

On December 2, 1954, the Senate voted to "condemn" McCarthy on both counts by a vote of 67 to 22.[118] The Democrats present unanimously favored condemnation and the Republicans were split evenly. The only senator not on record was John F. Kennedy, who was hospitalized for back surgery; Kennedy never indicated how he would have voted.[119]

Immediately after the vote, Senator H. Styles Bridges, a McCarthy supporter, argued that the resolution was "not a censure resolution" because the word "condemn" rather than "censure" was used in the final draft. The word "censure" was then removed from the title of the resolution, though it is generally regarded and referred to as a censure of McCarthy, both by historians[120] and in Senate documents.[121] McCarthy himself said, "I wouldn't exactly call it a vote of confidence." He added, "I don't feel I've been lynched."[122]

Final years [edit]

After his censure, McCarthy continued senatorial duties for another two and a half years, but his career as a major public figure had been unmistakably ruined. His colleagues in the Senate avoided him; his speeches on the Senate floor were delivered to a near-empty chamber or were received with conspicuous displays of inattention.[123] The press that had once recorded his every public statement now ignored him, and outside speaking engagements dwindled almost to nothing. President Eisenhower, finally freed of McCarthy's political intimidation, quipped to his Cabinet that McCarthyism was now "McCarthywasm".[124]

Still, McCarthy continued to rail against Communism. He warned against attendance at summit conferences with "the Reds", saying that "you cannot offer friendship to tyrants and murderers ... without advancing the cause of tyranny and murder."[125] He declared that "coexistence with Communists is neither possible nor honorable nor desirable. Our long-term objective must be the eradication of Communism from the face of the earth." In one of his final acts in the Senate, McCarthy opposed President Eisenhower's nomination to the Supreme Court of William J. Brennan, after reading a speech Brennan had given shortly beforehand in which he characterized McCarthy's anti-Communist investigations as "witch hunts". McCarthy's opposition failed to gain any traction, however, and he was the only Senator to vote against Brennan's confirmation.[126]

McCarthy's biographers agree that he was a changed man after the censure; declining both physically and emotionally, he became a "pale ghost of his former self" in the words of Fred J. Cook.[127] It was reported that McCarthy suffered from cirrhosis of the liver and was frequently hospitalized for alcoholism. Numerous eyewitnesses, including Senate aide George Reedy and journalist Tom Wicker, reported finding him alarmingly drunk in the Senate. Journalist Richard Rovere (1959) wrote:

> He had always been a heavy drinker, and there were times in those seasons of discontent when he drank more than ever. But he was not always drunk. He went on the wagon (for him this meant beer instead of whiskey) for days and weeks at a time. The difficulty toward the end was that he couldn't hold the stuff. He went to pieces on his second or third drink. And he did not snap back quickly.[128]

Death [edit]

McCarthy died in Bethesda Naval Hospital on May 2, 1957, at the age of 48. The official cause of his death was listed as acute hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver. It was hinted in the press that he died of alcoholism, an estimation that is now accepted by contemporary biographers.[9] He was given a state funeral attended by 70 senators, and a Solemn Pontifical Requiem Mass was said before more than 100 priests and 2,000 others at Washington's St. Matthew's Cathedral. Thousands of people viewed the body in Washington. He was buried in St. Mary's Parish Cemetery, Appleton, Wisconsin, where more than 17,000 filed through St. Mary's Church to pay their last respects.[129] Three senators—George W. Malone, William E. Jenner, and Herman Welker—had flown from Washington to Appleton on the plane carrying McCarthy's casket. Robert F. Kennedy quietly attended the funeral in Wisconsin. McCarthy was survived by his wife, Jean, and their adopted daughter, Tierney.

Tombstone of Joseph McCarthy with the Fox River in the background

In the summer of 1957, a special election was held to fill McCarthy's seat. In the primaries, voters in both parties turned away from McCarthy's legacy. The Republican primary was won by Walter J. Kohler, Jr., who called for a clean break from McCarthy's approach; he defeated former Congressman Glenn Robert Davis, who charged that Eisenhower was soft on Communism. The Democratic winner was William Proxmire, who called the late McCarthy "a disgrace to Wisconsin, to the Senate, and to America". On August 27, Proxmire won the election, serving in the seat for 32 years until the end of his fifth full term at the start of 1989.[130]

Legacy [edit]

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Joseph McCarthy remains a very controversial figure. In the view of a few conservative latter-day authors, such as commentators William Norman Grigg[131] and Medford Stanton Evans,[132][133] McCarthy's place in history should be reevaluated. Some scholars assert that new evidence—in the form of Venona-decrypted Soviet messages, Soviet espionage data now opened to the West, and newly released transcripts of closed hearings before McCarthy's subcommittee—has partially vindicated McCarthy by showing that many of his identifications of Communists were correct and that the scale of Soviet espionage activity in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s was larger than many scholars suspected.[134][135][136] After reviewing evidence from Venona and other sources, historian John Earl Haynes concluded that, of 159 people identified on lists used or referenced by McCarthy, evidence was substantial that nine had aided Soviet espionage efforts. He suggested that a majority of those on the lists could legitimately have been considered security risks, but that a substantial minority could not.[137] Many other scholars, including some generally regarded as conservative, have opposed these views.[138][139]

Among those implicated in files later made public from the Venona project and Soviet sources were Cedric Belfrage, Frank Coe, Lauchlin Currie, Harold Glasser, David Karr, Mary Jane Keeney, and Leonard Mins.[137][140][141][142][143][144][145]

These viewpoints are considered by many scholars to be fringe revisionist history.[146] Challenging efforts aimed at the "rehabilitation" of McCarthy, Haynes argues that McCarthy's attempts to "make anti-communism a partisan weapon" actually "threatened [the post-War] anti-Communist consensus", thereby ultimately harming anti-Communist efforts more than helping.[147]

Diplomat George Kennan drew on his State Department experience to provide his view that "The penetration of the American governmental services by members or agents (conscious or otherwise) of the American Communist Party in the late 1930s was not a figment of the imagination ... it really existed; and it assumed proportions which, while never overwhelming, were also not trivial." Kennan wrote that under the Roosevelt administration: "warnings which should have been heeded fell too often on deaf or incredulous ears."[148] However, Kennan made his assessment before the revelation of the Venona decrypts. The facts in the Venona documents were damning. The previous cautious assessments had to be revised. Not a few "but hundreds of American Communists abetted Soviet espionage in the United States" in the 1930s and 1940s. No modern government had been more thoroughly penetrated. Plus, only a tiny fraction of the Venona intercepts have been decrypted (about 3%), so no one knows the entire extent of the penetration. All anyone can know for sure is that the Soviet penetration into the United States government was massive.[149][150]

William Bennett, former Reagan Administration Secretary of Education, summed up this perspective in his 2007 book *America: The Last Best Hope*:

> The cause of anti-communism, which united millions of Americans and which gained the support of Democrats, Republicans and independents, was undermined by Sen. Joe McCarthy ... McCarthy addressed a real problem: disloyal elements within the U.S. government. But his approach to this real problem was to cause untold grief to the country he claimed to love ... Worst of all, McCarthy besmirched the honorable cause of anti-communism. He discredited legitimate efforts to counter Soviet subversion of American institutions.[151]

HUAC and SACB [edit]

McCarthy's hearings are often incorrectly conflated with the hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). HUAC is best known for the investigation of Alger Hiss and for its investigation of the Hollywood film industry, which led to the blacklisting of hundreds of actors, writers, and directors. HUAC was a House committee, and as such had no formal connection with McCarthy, who served in the Senate, although the existence of the House Un-American Activities Committee thrived in part as a result of McCarthy's activities. HUAC was active for 29 years.[*citation needed*]

Similarly, the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) was a five-member committee established by the McCarran Internal Security Act, which had a mandate, similar to HUAC and inspired by McCarthy, to locate and investigate so-called "subversives", or those sympathetic to the Communists. They were accused of promoting the establishment of a "totalitarian dictatorship" in the United States. Truman vetoed the act, sending Congress a lengthy veto message in which he criticized specific provisions as "the greatest danger to freedom of speech, press, and assembly since the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798," and called it a "mockery of the Bill of Rights" and a "long step toward totalitarianism". His veto was overridden. SACB was active for 22 years.[*citation needed*]

In popular culture [edit]

From the start of his notoriety, McCarthy was a favorite subject for political cartoonists. He was traditionally depicted in a negative light, normally pertaining to McCarthyism and his accusations. Herblock's cartoon that coined the term *McCarthyism* appeared less than two months after the senator's now famous February 1950 speech in Wheeling, West Virginia. In 1953, the popular daily comic strip *Pogo* introduced the character Simple J. Malarkey, a pugnacious and conniving wildcat with an unmistakable physical resemblance to McCarthy. After a worried Rhode Island newspaper editor protested to the syndicate that provided the strip, creator Walt Kelly began depicting the Malarkey character with a bag over his head, concealing his features. The explanation was that Malarkey was hiding from a Rhode Island Red hen, a clear reference to the controversy over the Malarkey character.[152]

As his fame grew, McCarthy increasingly became the target of ridicule and parody. He was impersonated by nightclub and radio impressionists and was satirized in *Mad* magazine, on *The Red Skelton Show*, and elsewhere. Several comedy songs lampooning the senator were released in 1954, including "Point of Order" by Stan Freberg and Daws Butler, "Senator McCarthy Blues" by Hal Block, and unionist folk singer Joe Glazer's "Joe McCarthy's Band", sung to the tune of

"McNamara's Band". Also in 1954, the radio comedy team Bob and Ray parodied McCarthy with the character "Commissioner Carstairs" in their soap opera spoof "Mary Backstayge, Noble Wife". That same year, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio network broadcast a satire, *The Investigator*, whose title character was a clear imitation of McCarthy. A recording of the show became popular in the United States, and was reportedly played by President Eisenhower at cabinet meetings.[153]

The 1953 fiction novel "Mr. Costello, Hero" by Theodore Sturgeon was described by noted journalist and author Paul Williams as "the all-time great story about Senator Joseph McCarthy, who he was and how he did what he did."[154] The novel was adapted in 1958 by X Minus One into a radio teleplay and broadcast on July 3, 1956.[155] In a 1977 interview Sturgeon commented that it was his concerns about the ongoing McCarthy Hearings that prompted him to write the story.[156]

A more serious fictional portrayal of McCarthy played a central role in the 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate* by Richard Condon.[157] The character of Senator John Iselin, a demagogic anti-communist, is closely modeled on McCarthy, even to the varying numbers of Communists he asserts are employed by the federal government.[158] He remains a major character in the 1962 film version.[159]

McCarthy was portrayed by Peter Boyle in the 1977 Emmy-winning television movie *Tail Gunner Joe*, a dramatization of McCarthy's life.[160] Archival footage of McCarthy himself was used in the 2005 movie *Good Night, and Good Luck* about Edward R. Murrow and the *See It Now* episode that challenged McCarthy.[161] McCarthy was also portrayed by Joe Don Baker in the 1992 HBO film *Citizen Cohn*.[162] In the German-French docu-drama "The Real American - Joe McCarthy" (2012), directed by Lutz Hachmeister, McCarthy is portrayed by the British actor and comedian John Sessions.[163]

R.E.M.'s song "Exhuming McCarthy" from their 1987 album *Document* largely deals with McCarthy and contains sound clips from the Army-McCarthy Hearings.

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Defenses of McCarthy:

- "The Search for Joe McCarthy", *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Volume 60, No. 3, Spring 1977, by Thomas C. Reeves
- "Editor Taints Recently Published Hearings: How Senate Historian Botched Data on McCarthy" by M. Stanton Evans
- "Levin and Collins Trigger Disinformation: Senate Historian Clams Up When Queried On McCarthy" by M. Stanton Evans

Criticism of McCarthy:

- "Has She No Shame?" by Joe Conason
- *Senator Joe McCarthy* (excerpt) by Richard Rovere

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Preceded by **Robert M. La Follette Jr.**	**U.S. Senator (Class 1) from Wisconsin** 1947–1957 Served alongside: **Alexander Wiley**	Succeeded by **William Proxmire**

	Political offices	
Preceded by **John L. McClellan** **Arkansas**	**Chairman of Senate Government Operations Committee** 1953–1955	Succeeded by **John L. McClellan** **Arkansas**

	Honorary titles	
Preceded by **William F. Knowland**	**Youngest Member of the United States Senate** 1947–1948	Succeeded by **Russell B. Long**

V · T · E **United States Senators from Wisconsin** [show]

V · T · E **Chairmen of the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs** [show]

V · T · E **Cold War** [show]

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