



To "Bob + Barb" With Best Personal
Wishes. Bill Kanow

Image: Harris & Ewing, Washington, DC, c.1950. Courtesy of the Archives at Hanover College.

Statement of William Jenner

After the Senate voted to censure Joseph McCarthy in December 1954, the senator's meteoric rise to fame ended in a symmetrical plunge into infamy, effectively concluding his career in the Senate. Two and a half years later, on May 2, 1957, McCarthy died from hepatitis, which many believe stemmed from alcoholism. The senator received a state funeral at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, D.C., which was attended by seventy senators. His casket was then flown back to Wisconsin to be buried, accompanied by three senators, one of whom was William Jenner. It is no surprise then, that Senator Jenner delivered to the Senate the following statement honoring his fallen colleague. In it, Jenner explained that McCarthy was human and fallible but that, while his actions may have been questionable, his character and purpose were not. In the final lines of the document, Jenner warned his fellow senators to remain wary of the threat of Communists in the government because Joseph McCarthy was no longer there to do the job for them.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM E. JENNER (R-IND.)
IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE – AUGUST 14, 1957

The story of Joe McCarthy will be repeated wherever the history of our time is discussed. Joe McCarthy lived his political career in the very storm center of the most insidious danger which has ever faced our country and the world.¹²⁸

This is not the time or the place to go into the political controversies which rent our domestic life into warring factions.

Our purpose here is to pay tribute to a friend and fellow Senator.

A little episode will give the quality of the man. A visitor to Washington was busy at a party, denouncing Joe McCarthy and his works. When he finished, the guest he was addressing put out his hand with a friendly smile, and said "I'm Joe McCarthy. Let's talk it over."

Joe McCarthy was human. He had weaknesses, like all of us. When he was cut with knives, he bled. But he had a fighting heart. He fought the enemies of his country to the best of his powers. But when men he admired seemed to desert him, his heart broke.

Joe McCarthy loved his country. He loved the State he represented. Like so many men who have fought in battle, he felt a sense of love and protectiveness for the younger men sent into new wars. Joe McCarthy did not end his service to his country when he left the armed forces. It was inconceivable to him that mere boys should be sent into battle to fight Communists in Asia, while men in high office were unwilling to fight communists at home.

Joe McCarthy loved the Senate. He respected and admired his colleagues, especially the men who served for years before he came in, with the post war class of 1946.

¹²⁸ Sen. Joseph McCarthy died May 2, 1957, at the age of 48.

When he entered this Chamber, to take the oath to support the Constitution; when he sensed suddenly, in the midst of the daily trifles, that the Senate was molding the Law by which our nation lives; when he looked, at evening, toward the dome of the Capitol against the sky, he felt a kinship with all the men who have served in Congress, with all the men who have tried in their separate ways to make America strong and free.

He was proud that he, a farm boy, had been chosen by his own people in Wisconsin, to represent them in the Senate of the United States. At moments he must have thought, as we all do, that if his father and mother could look down and see him, they would be happy to see what their son had done.

If Senator Joe McCarthy had been a petty or a vengeful man, he could have used the vote of censure to tear the Senate of the United States into bitter factions. But he understood the Communist mentality too well. He knew that was what they wanted, and what they expected. He would not injure the Senate of the United States, to get a little personal revenge.

Once the vote was cast, he asked nothing of his supporters. He turned a smiling friendly face to his traducers. No man in public life has been more shamefully maligned. For the first time in our history, I believe, the meanness of his enemies pursued a man beyond the grave.

We misunderstood his gentleness. We did not know his heart had broken. We did not know that the mainspring was gone. Nothing could erase from his memory the fact that friends and colleagues, all patriots and men of good will, had voted to censure his conduct as a Senator. For what reason? Because he believed Communists should be driven from places of honor and trust in the United States.

Joe McCarthy was vindicated again and again. Even the Internal Revenue Bureau proved the dishonesty of the petty personal charges brought against him, by returning taxes he had overpaid.

But when the months dragged by, with no effort by his colleagues to rescind the cruel misjudgment they had placed against him, his tired heart could bear no more.

There is only one service we can do now for Joe McCarthy, one recompense for what he suffered. We can each make a solemn vow to understand the danger that faces our country, and take up the burden that has fallen from his hands.

Senator McCarthy believed in what the Communists sarcastically call the conspiracy theory of history. We know well the evidence that the Communists are trying to conquer the world, by conspiracy if possible. Karl Marx turned his own venomous hatred of his own country into the doctrine that the proletariat of the world should [sic] make war on patriots of all countries and destroy all nations. Lenin remade Karl Marx's doctrine of open war into a plan for secret conspiratorial assault on the peaceful governments of other countries. Out of the hatred, and frustration of the oppressed in Imperial Russia, Lenin fashioned his strategy for turning the discontented into a secret order, dedicated to destroying all peaceful nations by subversion.

Forty years have passed since the Russian Empire collapsed but the Communists still use methods derived from the conspirators who fought the might of Czars and their secret police. Stalin consistently proclaimed his devotion to the same corrupt and poisoned doctrine, born in the garrets and Siberian prison camps of Czarist Russia.

Krushchev has said only recently that the Communists would adhere to that doctrine of violence and hate, until shrimps learn to whistle.

Why was it wrong of Joseph McCarthy to believe Lenin and Stalin and Krushchev? Can anyone offer one single bit of evidence to discredit the statements of these highest Communist authorities that they still intend to remake the world by secret conspiracy? Can any man, of even moderate intelligence, believe they intend to subvert the world, but spare the United States?

The active fight against Communism has receded since Senator McCarthy was censured for daring to bring the fight to the people. But the danger is still as great as ever. Krushchev himself has told us so.

The burden of post-war fatigue lies heavy on Americans, as it does on the people of the rest of the world, including Soviet Russia. Wars have become to [sic] heavy for mortals do [sic] bear. Nearly all nations have suffered a loss of political vitality.

We do not have the fresh confidence that Joe McCarthy had, when he came new to the struggle with Communism. But the battle fatigue does not mean political impotence.

We are not ready today for a new crusade against Communism. But we can do something much simpler. We can each of us, as individuals, show utter contempt for the Benedict Arnolds who have betrayed us.

The American people know who are the men who have bowed to Communist pressure. We do not need any legal briefs or court procedures. We need only a healthy political instinct for survival.

Let us each of us here resolve that we shall never again have any dealings with any one in public life who has gained office or wealth or influence, by catering to Communists or their well-disguised pressure groups.

Let us not smile at them or touch their hands or tell them of our thoughts or listen to theirs. Let us not do business with them. Let us include them in no act of fellowship.

No American is too busy or too tired to choose non-intercourse with all cynical collaborators with Communism, as we would refuse our fellowship to Benedict Arnold if he was in our midst today.

I say that Joe McCarthy terrified the Communists because their hold was weak, not strong. I say the Communists, as such, have no real power to destroy our country, dangerous and destructive as they are. The alliance of the Communists with the ambitious and the timid is the only danger to America. If we break that alliance, if we end all the political advantages of collaboration, victory will be certain.

Joe McCarthy believed that no Communist, no pro-Communist, no person

soft on Communism, no one who had made a deal with Communism, has any right to a place in the American government or in any position of trust or leadership over the American people. He believed there is no place for any pro-Communist anywhere in our military establishment, where he can betray our fighting men. He believed there is no place in either of our great political parties for the mean-spirited connivers and makers of deals, who were willing to see America destroyed, if they could gain a little political advantage.

We can best pay our debt to the memory of Joe McCarthy, to the other Americans who have suffered in the fight on Communism here at home, and to the men who lost their lives in open war against Communism in Korea, by cleansing America of every last remnant of unclean Communist thought and vicious Communist power, until our country shall achieve a new birth of freedom out of the fires of that conflict in which Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin laid down his life.

I know the American people will never give up the fight. There is no decadence in our people, only in our institutions. As the Chaplain of the Senate said, when we met here to hold the final services for Senator Joe McCarthy, the Members of Congress are the watchmen on the city walls, whose duty it is to warn the people before the danger strikes. One of the watchmen has fallen. The task falls on us, his colleagues, to stand guard until all danger to our country is ended.

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