



Jack McManus - Reminiscences

Like millions of other Americans, my first encounter with John F. “Jack” McManus was through his film *Overview of America*. That was in 1974. I was in my senior year of college and was going through my socialist detox, re-examining the liberal-left political and economic rubbish with which I had been indoctrinated via schooling and media throughout my lifetime. Thanks to The John Birch Society, I had discovered *The Law* by Frédéric Bastiat, *The Road to Serfdom* by Friedrich Hayek, *Human Action* by Ludwig von Mises, and other similar literature of freedom. However, Jack McManus’ *Overview* hit me like a thunderbolt, distilling, crystallizing, and articulating the fundamental principles of our constitutional governing system and the free market in a way I hadn’t seen before. It had a terrific impact on me, as it has had on the millions of people who have watched it.



John F. McManus

The following year, 1975, I had a chance to meet him and spend some time with him at a John Birch Society summer youth camp in Colorado. We discussed many things, and he signed my application to join the Society. The following year, 1976, I joined the staff of The John Birch Society, thus beginning nearly half a century of working alongside Jack. Throughout that time I had the good fortune to work with him at many of the Society’s youth camps across the country. He enjoyed working with young people, whether teaching them in the classroom, playing volleyball, or telling stories and singing at campfires. At the Texas camp one year, Jack was coaxed into getting on a horse, something he had never done before. He was definitely uncomfortable in the saddle and couldn’t get the critter to move one way or the other. He flunked Equestrianism 101 with flying colors and everyone got a good laugh at his expense. But he took it all with his typical good humor.

On my speaking tours and book tours over the years I repeatedly experienced the “McManus Effect.” It was not uncommon, while being interviewed at a radio or television studio, to have the host say something like, “Your President, Mr. McManus, has been here a couple times. Charming fellow and well informed. He’s a great ambassador for you guys.” It was not only conservative hosts, but liberals as well. At a PBS station, the liberal host told me, “Mr. McManus and I argued heatedly on air about gun control, but then afterward, off-air we had a friendly, fun argument over the Red Sox vs. the Yankees.” A genuine Christian gentleman, he had that charitable Chestertonian quality of amiable combativeness. He held fast to his beliefs, but without rancor or *ad hominem* attacks. He also demonstrated, in his speeches, books, articles, and weekly columns, an amazing talent for making complex topics easily understood, a quality that helps explain the popularity of his presentations.

Among the many fond memories I have of Jack is our appearance on the 2001 televised PBS program,



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Debates Debates in New York City. The topic was “Should the U.S. Get Out of the United Nations?” Together with Kent Snyder of the Liberty Committee, we debated Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor, former UN Ambassador William vanden Huevel, and William Luers, president of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA). Both vanden Huel and Luers were prominent members of the Council on Foreign Relations. The mere fact that this issue had been raised to the level of being debated on PBS, with three of the globalists’ big guns defending their subversive institution, was a victory for the Society’s decades-long campaign to “Get US Out!” Jack was in the forefront of that campaign for many years.

More recently, Jack and I appeared remotely, each from different locations, on a live radio/video podcast. Again, the topic was the United Nations, but with global warming and Agenda 2030 added. Midway through the program my audio feed went out. I could see and hear the other participants, but they couldn’t hear me. It took 10 minutes for the studio sound engineer to get me patched back in. But, in the meantime, I marveled that Jack, then 86 or 87, had so seamlessly taken up where I had dropped out and carried on magnificently. He was still firing on all mental cylinders. May I be so fortunate should I attain his octogenarian status.

During one of our joint trips to Washington, D.C., Jack and I were joined by a great patriot and World War II hero, Admiral Thomas Moorer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs. We found Admiral Moorer to be a sensational door opener, as we walked the halls of Congress and met with senators and representatives to discuss the dangers of giving up U.S. control over the Panama Canal. We were also helped in that effort by Admiral Paul Hill and Brigadier General Albion Knight.

In another trip to D.C., Jack and I survived a serious collision on the freeway on a Sunday morning on our drive to Mass in Virginia which was to be followed by a meeting with our mutual friend Professor Robert Hickson. The rental car was totaled, and we were bloodied and whiplashed, but walked away otherwise unscathed, although we did miss Mass. That was the only time in our travels together that we missed Mass on a Sunday. And I could always count on Jack to know where we could find a traditional Latin Mass to attend.

Unlike Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi, and other self-proclaimed “devout” Catholics, Jack was a true believer, a fervent follower of Jesus Christ. For Jack, truth mattered. He was not deceived by moral relativity or equivocal modernist notions of right and wrong. He was proud of his Catholic faith, proud of being an American, proud of his Irish heritage, proud of being a Marine, and proud of being a member of The John Birch Society. Year after year, decade after decade, he faithfully fought the good fight for God, family, and country.

In 2010, Jack and I visited Joseph Sobran shortly before his death. Sobran, one of the finest writers and thinkers in America, had penned a foreword for Jack’s book *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Pied Piper for the Establishment*. Joe was sitting on his bed praying the rosary when we entered his room. We had a lovely visit, even though it was sad knowing that the outpouring of inimitable Sobran wit and wisdom soon would cease.

Now, the outpouring of inimitable McManus wit and wisdom has also ceased. However, Jack’s books, writings, and recordings will continue to inform and inspire. *Requiescat in pace*, my friend.



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