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HILLARY CLINTON INTERVIEW  
*JOHN MCCAIN: FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*  
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**HILLARY CLINTON**  
**Former First lady, Senator & Secretary of State**  
**November 21, 2017**  
Interviewed by Teddy Kunhardt  
**Total Running Time: 24 Minutes**

**START TC:**  
**QT: 01;00;00;00**

**QT: 01;00;00;00**

**CREW:**

Hillary Clinton, take one, marker.

**QT: 01;00;05;21**

**TITLE**

John McCain and the POWs

**QT: 01;00;09;03**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

I'm not exactly sure when I became aware of him, and the other POWs, because there began to be a growing awareness of the men who were imprisoned in the 'Hanoi Hilton' as it was called. So, I can't exactly place it, but it was in that period of time between probably, '67 and '71, '72, somewhere in there.

**QT: 01;00;37;21**

**TITLE**

John Kerry's Vietnam testimony

**QT: 01;00;42;11**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

I became familiar with John Kerry because of his dramatic testimony when he came back from Vietnam before the congress.

**QT: 01;00;52;13**

**TITLE**

Normalization of relations with Vietnam

**QT: 01;00;56;18**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

One of the highlights of Bill's presidency was bringing together people like John McCain and John Kerry to plot the path forward toward normalization with Vietnam. I think it was a little surprising to Bill, that Senator McCain was as positive about it as he turned out to be. But, he and John Kerry were really the voices and the faces of the argument in favor of normalization, and that meant not just a lot to the administration, but more importantly to a lot of veterans.

**QT: 01;01;37;21**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

That these two men who both had served and both had acquitted themselves with real honor, one serving as a prisoner of war, the other, you know, earning military honors for his time in Vietnam as well, were stepping forward and saying we've got to move forward to do this with Vietnam. I was on the trip with Bill and the others when we went to Vietnam, and made that announcement. Visited some of the places that were so historically and personally important to both Johns, and those who had served. It was an incredibly emotional experience for all of us.

**QT: 01;02;29;12**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

I was at the Hanoi Hilton; we did the tour of the Hanoi Hilton. We had—you know, there were sort of waves of people on that tour. So, I think there was a smaller group including the president and others who were there for, you know, really seeing what they could. But a number of us were privileged to be able to also share in that experience.

**QT: 01;02;55;16**

**TITLE**

Meeting John McCain

**QT: 01;02;59;10**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

I probably did not meet John until Bill was president. I have a memory of meeting him at the lunch after the inauguration. Which is kind of ironic, because I saw him at the lunch after the latest inauguration as well. But, he was someone who I was really intrigued by, wanted to know more about, and had not a lot of opportunity, but some during the eight years of Bill's presidency, and then most particularly, around the normalization of relations with Vietnam.

**QT: 01;03;36;09**

**TITLE**

The 2000 presidential election and working with McCain in the Senate

**QT: 01;03;41;07**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Well, when I got to the Senate in 2001, it was after a really brutal election. Both a brutal republican primary, where John was contesting for the nomination against George W. Bush; and there was a lot that happened in that primary campaign that was really terrible. The things that were said about him and about his family, and the rumor mongering, and the spreading of lies about his family in particular. And then of course, I was deeply upset because, I didn't like the way the election had ended with what I thought of as an ill-thought through, unprecedented supreme court decision.

**QT: 01;04;25;22**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Giving the election to George W. Bush. So, I wasn't in the best of moods when I showed up, and I don't know that he was either. But, because the Senate is so small, it's just a 100 people, and you're with them all the time, I really made a point of reaching out and trying to get to know all of the senators on both sides of the aisle. And John was very approachable. He was constantly making asides and funny remarks about everything that was going on in the Senate. So, I began to get to know him, and then of course after 9/11, it was something that brought us together on the Armed Services Committee. Going on trips together, and trying to figure out the best path forward to protect the country.

**QT: 01;05;17;11**

**TITLE**

On bipartisanship and McCain's efforts to make the Senate work

**QT: 01;05;21;15**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Well, that's what I've always thought you're supposed to do, and I think he believes the same. That, you may have different views, but it used to be, and even when I was in the Senate it was much more common, that you would find some way to work together with nearly everybody on issues that were of mutual interest. That's what John did. John was a leader in forging bi-partisan compromise. Just the time that I was there, he tried to do it on climate change. He tried to do it on immigration reform.

**QT: 01;05;55;12**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

He tried to do it on having a more orderly process to consider judicial appointments. He was very focused on trying to make the Senate work, and you can't really make it work. I mean, you can push through things, and we're seeing some of that today. But, you can't really make it work, and be the greatest deliberative body in the world, unless you're willing to listen to each

other and sit around a table and try to find common ground. He always believed in that.

**QT: 01;06;22;08**

**TITLE**

Newt Gingrich, the partisan offensive and Hillary's respect for McCain

**QT: 01;06;26;09**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Well, it started in the House and it really picked up steam in the 90s. You had a total partisan power-grabbing member of congress like Newt Gingrich, who was trying to turn the House into a partisan tool. And he was largely successful in doing that, and it was bad for the country. And it was really undermining of the way a legislature is supposed to operate. A lot of the members of the House were part of that partisan offensive, that Gingrich started and led in the beginning, ended up in the Senate. People who started in the House, ended up in the Senate, and began to try to undermine the decorum and the regular order of the Senate.

**QT: 01;07;23;00**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Ya know, their view was, that the Senate is just a small House, and if you can push things through, and not listen to each other, all the better if you can get your way. John McCain did not go along with that. He really believed that there had to be more collegiality, and I often heard him say, you know, you may be with somebody tomorrow, you may be against them the next day, but you may be back with them the following week. And why would you be just conducting scorched earth politics in the United States Senate?

**QT: 01;07;54;13**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

So, it started in the 90s, there was a period of kind of collegiality and cooperation post-9/11 when there was a real challenge to the safety of our

country. But then, it picked back up again, and it was particularly prominent during President Obama's two terms because, basically the Republicans wanted to make him a one-term president, they didn't wanna cooperate, they didn't wanna give him any votes, they didn't wanna find common ground. And now, of course, we see it at an even more extreme level. Where they don't even wanna have committee hearings, they don't wanna markup bills in an appropriate, reasonable way.

**QT: 01;08;40;06**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

They don't wanna let amendments come to the floor. They're just stripping the checks and balances out of the Senate. And I think we've seen with Senator McCain, that that's just contrary to what he believes the Senate should represent. And so, both in the Obama administration when he worked on immigration, and he helped to bring Republicans and Democrats together, and the bill passed the Senate; but the more partisan House wouldn't even bring it up for a vote.

**QT: 01;09;10;10**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

On climate change, he and I traveled the world together trying to bring greater visibility to the real effects of climate change. From Svalbard, you know, the most northern inhabited place in the world, to Point Barrow, which is our highest point in the United States. He was willing to talk about climate change, and he and Joe Lieberman, you know, tried really hard to get the Republican party to accept the reality. And because they listened to their fossil fueled donors more than they listen to scientists, John and Joe were not successful despite their best efforts. So, we've seen John stand up and speak out. And I don't always agree with him. I mean, we're often on the other sides of issues; but I respect him, I believe he tries to ya know, study an issue, he tries to come to a conclusion that's in keeping with his values, but also ya know, rooted in reality. And he's playing such an important role now in the current Senate, and in this current administration.

**QT: 01;10;18;09**

**TITLE**

Traveling and studying climate change

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with John McCain

**QT: 01;10;23;13**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

(Laughs) Well, he is the perpetual motion machine. And traveling with him requires you to keep up with him and that is not always easy, because there's not a spare minute. I mean, if you have a meeting at 2 and another meeting at 4, you know, at 3 o'clock he wants to fill that space, and do something else together. But, I really—I really appreciated his invitation to me to start traveling with him, because I was intrigued by him, I wanted to get to know him better, I loved seeing him in action on the floor. And, When he said I wanna go and study climate change, I wanna see for myself what I'm reading about, I jumped on board. And, we did. We went to Svalbard, we had a memorable visit with scientists. We were on a boat that was going around that big island, looking at glaciers, and having experts tell us how much they were receding. Learning more about how fragile the Arctic is.

**QT: 01;11;29;19**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

We went to the Yukon territory in Canada because we wanted to meet with Indigenous people. And, John made a big point about that. You know, he represents Native Americans in Arizona, probably the biggest number of anybody in the Senate. And, he wanted to meet with Indigenous Canadians. He wanted to also see the results of climate change. I remember we were flying to—into the Yukon, and he said, "Come look out the window. Look out the window." And we were seeing whole forests devastated by a beetle, that because the climate had been warming was able to move from south to north; and, it was just ya know, eating up these pristine primeval forests.

**QT: 01;12;19;00**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

When we were in Alaska, once again, we met with Indigenous, Native Alaskans, and they told us stories about what it had been like when they were young, and they were able to go hunting. And now, the herds had moved further north. Or, you know, how difficult it was to continue to provide for their families with their annual ya know, whale hunts, because

even the whales were moving out of warming water. We met with Alaskans who've already been moved away from the coast because the—the ice no longer protects their coastline in winter, 'cause it's not there as it once was, as thick and protective, a film around the coast as it had been. And that was John, he was always asking questions. And, when we were on these trips together, he really ya know, zeroed in. "Well, how did this happen? Tell me a specific story. What did that mean to you?" And he listened to people. He was a great travel companion, and a really fascinating, curious person to be with under any circumstances.

**QT: 01;13;35;23**

**TITLE**

John McCain's sense of humor

**QT: 01;13;41;01**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

He is funny. He's got a very sarcastic, kind of snide sense of humor. He loves making fun of people, particularly if he likes them. He, you know, "Oh well, do we have to wait for you to get your hair done?" And I'll say, "Well yeah, we don't have to wait for you. You don't even have very much left." I mean, you know, things like that, that would be just a kind of banter back and forth. And, he—he had a great energy when we traveled. He was—he just didn't wanna sleep. He wanted to see everything, and when we were in Svalbard, I remember, we were staying in this little tiny hotel, and it was—you know, it was the Northern Lights. It never, ever got dark. He said, "I just may sit here and look out this window and stay up all night." I said, "Well, I think you probably need to get some sleep." But, he was just embracing of life, he wanted to experience everything, he wanted to go everywhere, he wanted to meet everybody. And, I loved that life force that he exhibits.

**QT: 01;14;43;20**

**TITLE**

John McCain's legendary temper

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**QT: 01;14;48;02**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Yes, I've seen it on the floor of the Senate, and I've seen it personally. A couple of times when we'd be traveling together, and we'd be meeting leaders, you know, presidents, prime ministers—and we have these formal discussions with them, where the country would be on one side of the table, and our delegation would be on the other. And John would be pressing for a point. Like, you know, "Well when are you gonna have elections, you can't be postponing elections. You've got to hold elections."

**QT: 01;15;21;12**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

And he would be getting madder and madder, because the person on the other side would be equivocating, or ya know, basically giving him non-answers, and occasionally, I would be sitting next to him. And so, I'd take my hand and I'd put it on his arm, and I'd say, "Well, what Senator McCain is trying to say—" You know, as a kind of signal. Let's not have an international incident here, and you know, get really wrought up with these people. But mostly he was of good humor and tough, but ya know, very collegial and affable when we traveled.

**QT: 01;15;52;05**

**TITLE**

On hearing of John's diagnosis

**QT: 01;15;56;04**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

Oh, I heard it on the news. Like, I guess the vast majority of people had. I immediately put in a call to him, and shortly after spoke with him, also spoke with Cindy who I've gotten to know as well over the years. He was his usual optimistic self. Not unrealistically so, but making it clear he was in for the fight. He was gonna do whatever it took, he was very confident in the care he was getting, both in Arizona and in Washington.

**QT: 01;16;32;11**

**TITLE**

McCain and the Republican attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act

**QT: 01;16;37;18**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

I knew—I—I had seen John at the lunch after the inauguration of Donald Trump, and I knew that John was concerned that there might be decisions made by a Republican president that he couldn't agree with. And, I think he was determined to do what he thought was right, and this was before the diagnosis. He was just really passionate, I mean, I gave him a big hug at that—at that lunch. I write in my book what happened, that he looked nearly as distraught as I did. And from the beginning, I think he like a lot of people, wanted to give the new administration a chance to really demonstrate that it was going to represent all of the people of America and not just those who had supported then President Trump. And the first real test was this whole repeal and replace of the Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare.

**QT: 01;17;50;13**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

You know, John had been for repealing and replacing, but he also is somebody who believes in the regular order, the process of coming to legislative conclusions that will actually make things work, and make them defensible. And I think he was really disappointed at how poorly prepared either the administration, or the leadership of the Senate was in translating whatever that meant. It was like the classic dog catching the car. Okay, now what do we do? And he kept putting them on notice. You know; we need to have regular order. We need to have the Senate work. We can't be just throwing out all of the process that makes us the greatest deliberative body.

**QT: 01;18;37;00**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

So, I don't think anybody who knew John McCain, who had worked with John McCain, should have been surprised by the speech he gave on the floor. Now, it still wasn't clear how he was gonna vote. And the Republican leadership in

the White House were trying to make up process that they could then point to, which might give him enough comfort to be able to vote for what they were proposing.

**QT: 01;19;01;17**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

But, that's not what he had in mind. He wasn't, you know—John is not interested in phony process, or ya know, the kind of charade that was being conducted by the administration. You know, he—ya know, he is somebody who says, you know, “Show me. I wanna see it, and then I'll either be for it or against it. But, you've gotta prove to me that it's legitimate.” And they didn't. So, the speech was putting everybody on notice, and then the vote was a result of what he had been saying, and the warnings he'd been sounding, that were not followed.

**QT: 01;19;44;08**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

He basically said, you know, “They're just not doing it right. They're not—they're not following the rules. They're not giving any of us a strong foundation to stand on be able to make a decision.” So, I had an inkling that he was leaning against it. He didn't come out and tell me the way he came out and told you, but I stayed up. I stayed up really late that night because I wanted to see. I knew that there were two votes against it, with both Senator Collins and Senator Murkowski going on record and being incredibly courageous, two women I might note. And I wanted to see whether John would be that necessary third vote, and I was thrilled when he was.

**QT: 01;20;26;05**

**TITLE**

McCain's condemnation of torture in Abu Ghraib

**QT: 01;20;30;19**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

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I remember how horrified John was when the reports and the photographs starting coming out of Abu Ghraib. He could not believe that American soldiers would engage in that kind of disgraceful behavior amounting to torture. I well remember the hearings that we had in the Armed Services Committee, and he was just beside himself with anger and frustration. And with the excuses being given by military and civilian leaders. And, you know, he has more right to talk about torture than anybody else serving in—in government right now.

**QT: 01;21;21;02**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

And he was not shy about linking that kind of outrageous dehumanizing behavior with the collapse and the repudiation of American values. I was really proud of him, and I know he's been trying to get that declassified. He wants names and he wants people to be held accountable, because he wants to send a signal - this is not only unacceptable for what happened in Iraq, this is always unacceptable. And I think that's particularly important now because, what we're finding is that the current administration, led by the current president, seems to have no values.

**QT: 01;22;01;00**

**HILLARY CLINTON:**

No guardrails. Whatever they want to have happen, they just say, "Go ahead and do it." They have changed the rules of engagement, they have been bombing so much, that they're unfortunately perhaps increasing civilian casualties, as recent reports have demonstrated. So, I think John is passionate about getting this declassified and into the public domain, because he wants to send a message. This is unacceptable behavior by any member of the United States military, and it is unacceptable for any civilian to either order it, or to turn a—turn a blind eye to it.

**QT: 01;22;43;15**

**TITLE**

McCain's legacy

**QT: 01;22;48;09**

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## **HILLARY CLINTON:**

Well, I will miss that maverick personality that he has brought to politics. He was a maverick, but he wasn't a loner. He wanted to work with people as he did in immigration, climate change, judicial appointments. He was always looking for ways to make a difference, a positive difference. But he did it his own way. He kind of was the epitome of Frank Sinatra's song, and that meant you never knew what he was going to say or do. There was an element of surprise always associated with John in the Senate. When he'd come to the floor, what was going to be said? And you knew it would be impactful, but you weren't quite sure where it would land.

**QT: 01;23;32;08**

## **HILLARY CLINTON:**

But I always think of him as a warrior patriot. He served our country with distinction, he sacrificed in our military as a prisoner of war. He refused to be released when he was offered it, unless all of his fellow POWs were released. He's always tried to place country before party. He's always tried to live up to the tradition of his family, that has served America for generations, that he reveres. And he is really conscious about how history will judge someone in public life, because he reads a lot of biographies. He's fascinated by the decisions that people make who have positions of power and I think he will be judged as a consequential leader for our country.

**END TC:**

**QT: 01;24;30;18**