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| Senator Joe R McCarthy |
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Senator McCarthy

Senator Joe McCarthy and his Red Scare was one of the last “witch hunts” to take place in the United States. McCarthy’s tactics in his search for communists led to the destruction of his already weak reputation while he was in office. It is often taught that McCarthy was an overzealous madman that was out for fame and glory without concern for who he hurt. The purpose of this paper is not to show McCarthy as “a good guy”; rather, it is to show him in a different light. Even though McCarthy’s methods were reprehensible, given new information released by the Soviet Union he was not far from his mark. Yet, in order to understand how McCarthy was able to gain his power, one must understand the time and in which he rose to power.

The first Red Scare that took place in the United States happened around the time of 1919, shortly after the First World War. During this time, the American people began to become restless and unsure of how to live in a time of peace. Yet, prior to this restless peace that plagued the people, the government established legislation that would help shape the impending 1919 Red Scare. During the time of the war, there was distrust among the people, and it showed in legislation that was passed. The government had set up many different sedition and espionage acts during the war in order to control disloyalty to the country.

In 1917 the first act to be passed was the Espionage Act, which allowed the government to fine and charge a person for something as small as libel against the military. Then came the Sedition Act of 1918, which seemed to deal with sedition problems more directly than any others. It was used to bring charges against people that spoke against the government itself. Lastly came the most important piece of legislation, which was passed in October 1918. The Aliens act essentially stated that, “All aliens who were anarchists or believed in the violent overthrow of the American government or advocated the assassination of public officials were henceforth to be excluded from admission into the United States” (Murray 14). These acts set the stage for the hysteria that would follow and cause the Red Scare to begin.

The first crusader in the fight against the Reds was Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Palmer was famous for his Palmer Raids and his ruthlessness against communists. During Palmer’s time there was a Coalminer’s’ strike, which turned out to be the opportunity that Palmer was waiting for. This strike was organized by the Union of Russian Workers. This union was founded in 1907 and contained people that were “atheists, communists and anarchists” (Murray 196). Their desire to overturn the government made them the perfect target for the sedition acts enacted by the government. Under this legislation, Palmer and his raiders went in and confiscated truckloads of propaganda from this organization. Over 200 men and women were violently removed from the premises. This is just one example of Palmer’s many raids. Palmer’s actions were just the start to the nationwide hysteria that would sweep into people’s homes.

Next to come within this hysteria was Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. McCarthy’s Red Scare did not come until around twenty-eight years after Palmer’s. McCarthy and Palmer were quite different from one another despite their mutual goal to drive out communism. Palmer was the Attorneys General while McCarthy was a Senator. Aside from this difference, their leadership styles differed. Palmer preferred action while McCarthy preferred words; Palmer led his raids while McCarthy distanced himself. When Palmer was “fighting” during his Red Scare, he had political support because most of his claims were backed by hard evidence. McCarthy, on the other hand, had little to no evidence, and that is what hurt his investigations, his popularity, and his reputation. McCarthy’s Red Scare came to be considered a “Witch Hunt”.

The reason it was called a Witch Hunt was because no one was safe. During his time, McCarthy attacked people within politics and people outside of the realms of politics. He went as far as going after Hollywood actors and actresses. McCarthy went after many big names of the time; yet, he unfortunately was going after the wrong ones. There were those, such as Charlie Chaplin, that were both powerful and did take part in the Hollywood Communist party, whom McCarthy never pursued.

One of the most damning and immortalizing works on how people viewed McCarthy’s actions as a witch hunt is the play *The Crucible*. This play is about the witch trials that took place in Salem, Massachusetts. *The Crucible,* written by Arthur Miller, was a response to McCarthyism and how outrageous it became. It was believed at the time that McCarthy was a crazy, power hungry man. Yet in later years, it has been seen with the opening of Soviet documents and the Venona files that perhaps McCarthy was not all that wrong after all.

So what was the Red Scare? “Red Scare was a period of general fear of communists” (“Red Scare” def. 1). The Red Scare was more than just that simple definition; it was a mass hysteria that caused misunderstandings and hate amongst the people. The last Red Scare was both powered by politics and national emotions. The Red Scare of 1974 took place during the Cold War. The people did not seem to understand that the way the United States’ social network is set up made a hostile takeover impossible. The country’s society was far too complex and fluid to get enough people to help in the communist cause. Even though it probably crossed some minds at the time, the fear from the war caused radicals to become more powerful than they should have been. So the public believed they needed protection from the Reds coming to overthrow the government.

Demagogues are able to use fear to gain power for themselves or their causes. This is exactly what McCarthy did while he was Senator. Yet in order to understand the issue, it is important to understand the man and where he came from.

Joseph R. McCarthy was born November 14, 1908 in the small town of Grand Chute, Wisconsin. His whole family was from this small town. His grandfather was an Irish immigrant who settled in the area after first going to New York. While there, Stephen McCarthy married a Bavarian immigrant named Margaret Stoffel. This was unusual for the time because normally Irish did not marry outside of the Irish community. Yet they lived a happy full life together. They had ten children, and Tim McCarthy, who was Joseph McCarthy’s father, was the son that received one portion of their land after they died. Tim went on to marry Bridget Tierney, and they lived a simple life surrounded by Tim McCarthy’s brothers and sister.

Tim and Bridget were the parents of Joseph McCarthy, who was their fifth child. McCarthy was his mother’s favorite because of his appearance. McCarthy was described as a “gawky ugly duckling” (Oshinsky 3). The emotional abuse about his looks led to McCarthy’s many fights. He usually lost, and would go to his mother for comfort. This “coddling”, as his father called it, was why people believed him to be the favorite son of his mother.

There are two different theories on how McCarthy’s childhood actually was. One was very sad and dark, while the other was happy and normal for the time. The first theory was that his life was dark and lonely. In this theory, McCarthy was a chubby boy abused by his peers, namely his brothers; this caused him to be rather shy. Also the fact that he was picked on by his older brothers caused him to be something of a mama’s boy in need of her comfort and protection. McCarthy’s father frowned upon this favoritism, whom thought little of the boy and wanted him to learn to take care of himself. It was also stated that McCarthy’s mother’s “coddling” him caused friction between the parents. This childhood could not have been an easy one, and may have led to McCarthy wishing to get away from his family and never look back. Yet there are many contradictions to that theory once McCarthy’s older years are examined.

The book, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy,* by David Oshinsky, had a different take on what McCarthy’s family life was like while he was growing up. The story told here showed McCarthy had a mostly happy childhood. The McCarthy brothers were rough with each other but did not single out little Joe. Oshinsky also suggests that McCarthy was probably his father’s favorite as well as his mother’s. The reasoning behind this was his father believed in a hardworking, no nonsense type of living, and Joe McCarthy was a hard worker. Tim McCarthy expected his sons to be hard workers both in everyday life and on the farm. In the town of Grand Chute, the ability to do hard work was a kind of rite of passage into manhood. “Today sports and school are important. But not then. That was a different time” (Oshinsky 6). So, it is more likely that McCarthy lived a happy, normal life while growing up. Also it was believed that he was a hyperactive youngster. His overwhelming energy may have affected his policy making.

When McCarthy reached the age of fourteen, he dropped out of school in order to help out on the family farm. This was a very big disappointment for his mother. Yet during this time, getting a high school degree in Grand Chute was not a high priority. McCarthy also was not that interested in getting a high school diploma, so he worked on the family farm. His lack of enthusiasm about school may have been a disappointment to his mother, but was not discouraging to his father, who was more than happy to get another worker to help out on the farm. Yet McCarthy’s mother knew that he was meant for something greater.

McCarthy did not last long working on the family farm. He decided to go into business for himself. McCarthy’s small business was raising chickens and he did well for himself. About a year after McCarthy started his business, he had an accident and lost a good portion of his chickens, then became sick and was unable to save his business. Eventually he left Grand Chute to work at a Manawa county grocer at the age of twenty. Even though he was attached to his family and his home town, he was ready to get out and see the rest of the world. While he was in Manawa, Wisconsin, McCarthy was convinced to return to school. The people around him had seen how intelligent he was; they recognized he was destined for greater things than just working in a local grocer. So he attended Little Wolf High School at the age of twenty one. McCarthy proved his intelligence when he was able to finish his entire high school career in a year. After achieving this great accomplishment, McCarthy’s next step was to enter college.

In the year 1930, McCarthy entered Marquette College. He did this for financial and religious reasons. The Great Depression was going on during this time, and it was hard for people of McCarthy’s financial status to enter college; yet he made it work. So Marquette was the perfect choice for McCarthy because it was one of the less expensive colleges for that time. McCarthy started out his freshman year studying engineering, but he switched to law, because he found engineering to be boring. Another reason he switched to law was because all of his best friends were studying law and it seemed to be right for him. He joined the law fraternity, Delta Theta Phi, and served as a bailiff from 1934 to 1935. He proved to be a hard worker in and out of the classroom, and received his degree in 1935. He moved to Waupaca County just north of Appleton. He had a master plan when he got there: he was going to set up his own practice, get himself known, and then run for political office. This was an ambitious and challenging way to live life, but McCarthy would settle for no less. He opened his own practice, which was hard because of the Depression; but he was able to make it work and did his best. To advance his political career, he joined the Junior Chamber of Commerce softball team, sold tickets for political events and became a chairman on the Lions Club Harvest Committee. All of these were small political actions, but were the only options he had in such a small area. Most of the people in Waupaca remember McCarthy as “sloppy and disorganized” (Oshinsky 17). Yet he did not let his habits prevent him from bettering himself.

After only a year in Waupaca, McCarthy was finally able to further his goals. Mike Eberlein came and offered McCarthy a job at his firm in Shawano. This was a good political move for McCarthy. It was in this town that McCarthy tried his hand in more than college government. The same year that he arrived in Shawano, he ran for district attorney as the democratic incumbent. It came as no surprise to anyone that he lost the election, but it was good experience for him. McCarthy ran in this race for experience and to garner public attention. His platform was focused on the idea that the needs of the county were more important than his personal needs. So if McCarthy lost the race, all that mattered was that the county received the best district attorney. This position earned McCarthy mixed reviews, but got him the attention that he wanted. He waited and plotted before he made any other attempts to run for political position.

McCarthy waited two years before he tried for another political office. This time, he was running for circuit judgeship. The only problem McCarthy faced was that his friend and mentor, Mike Eberlein, had wanted to run for the judgeship for years. McCarthy was torn between loyalty and what was best. McCarthy believed that Mike Eberlein did not have a chance against the “powerful incumbent” (Oshinsky 19). McCarthy needed to come up with a way to run without running against his friend. So he announced that he was running for the judgeship without telling Mike Eberlein and did so before Mike Eberlein could announce his wishes. This little act caused the friendship to become very strained. Their relationship did not improve until after McCarthy became Senator (Oshinsky 20).

McCarthy still had to win against Edgar Werner, who was more experienced. The main advantage that McCarthy had over Werner was age. Werner was unpopular with the younger generation of lawyers, and that was damning to his campaign. Despite this advantage, McCarthy still needed to find some way to get ahead of his opponent. So McCarthy went about attacking Werner’s age and his salary. According to legend, McCarthy found Werner’s birth certificate, which proved that Werner was younger than he claimed to be. McCarthy needed something to make his opponent look bad in order to get votes. Werner rebutted McCarthy’s story by showing that the birth certificate that McCarthy had was wrong. When this tactic failed, McCarthy still needed to go after Werner. He did this by attacking Werner’s salary. McCarthy pointed out that Werner made a good amount of money and should just retire.

In the end, McCarthy won the election and took office without really talking about his legal practices. This defeat led Werner to retire, feeling humiliated. McCarthy had shown very little respect for this man who had served his community to the best of his ability. This was the second time in McCarthy’s career where he showed that he could be ruthless and did not care who was hurt as long as he got what he wanted.

McCarthy took office at the age of twenty-nine, making him the youngest circuit judge in decades. Unfortunately, his judgeship was met with a lot of controversy. More importantly, he became bored with the judgeship because it was not politically “big” enough for him. So he decided to join the Marines and go to war. He did not have to do this because of his political position, but his boredom got the better of him and off to war he went.

While in the war, McCarthy’s true colors started to show. He only wanted to get into the war to help his political career. He did this quite sufficiently – by lying. He lied about how many missions he had been on in order to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross. This was just one of the many ploys that he pulled to help himself look better to the people back home. One of his fellow captains tried to show the people what a disgrace McCarthy really was; unfortunately no one listened to him. The people around McCarthy knew he was very interested in going to Washington D.C. and being part of the government, and for some reason, they supported him.

In 1944, while still at war, McCarthy ran for the seat of Wisconsin Senator. This was met with some opposition because he still held the office of the circuit judge back home. It was stated in Wisconsin law that McCarthy should not hold another office, because he would neglect the one that he already held. This was what the secretary of state thought, but he was overruled by the attorney general, who allowed McCarthy to run. McCarthy ran knowing that he had no way of winning; he just did it, as he had before to get the experience. But where did McCarthy get all of his money for the campaign?

“Under Wisconsin law, a candidate could not contribute more than $5,000 to his own campaign” (Oshinsky 35). McCarthy lacked a lot of supporters willing to help pay for his campaign. Yet McCarthy had one of the best funded campaigns in Wisconsin history. The way he did this was by putting money given to his campaign under the names of people in his family. This was one of many ways McCarthy abused the system. Even so, all of the money and prestige that he received in the war was not enough to help him. He also tried to get out of paying taxes while running for senator; but in the end he paid them with interest. He was proving himself an unreliable and untrustworthy man. The defeat for the senatorship did not discourage McCarthy, but it ultimately led to his decision to leave the armed forces.

McCarthy asked for another leave from the war in 1944, claiming that he needed to return and take care of his judiciary duties. This leave was denied, and led to McCarthy getting his official discharge and leaving his post in 1945. He did this not for his judgeship or the people that he was serving, but for himself. There was another Senate seat about to be “up for grabs,” and McCarthy was not going to miss it. Once out of the war, McCarthy started planning his 1946 campaign.

McCarthy did not have an easy time running for the senate seat. He had to choose which political party was really the one he wanted to be a part of. When McCarthy started in politics, he was in favor of the New Deal and very much a Democrat. Yet, when running for the circuit judge, he ran as a Republican. In the end, he ran on the Republican ticket and had to change his ideals. He went from supporting the ideals of the New Deal to becoming very conservative against the very thing he once supported. These Republican ideals became his belief until he died years later.

McCarthy won the Senate election for 1946. McCarthy’s victory could have been considered a landslide, with his winning all but two of the counties within his running district. This victory was almost a two to one margin, which was quite an accomplishment.

McCarthy’s first two years as Senator were quite good. He was mostly well liked and got things done, though there were a few senators who disliked him. The disdain that McCarthy received from fellow senators earned him a poor reputation in and out of the government. His bad reputation was slowly defeating him, and the lack of support from his fellow Republicans really hurt his pride. The most important issue McCarthy faced was the loss of popularity with his constituents back home. He needed to find a way to win back their hearts or face not getting re-elected. So began his nationwide attack on the Communist threat within the country.

McCarthy started his dark path against the communists with his famous Wheeling speech. McCarthy gave this speech at a dinner being hosted by the Ohio County Women’s Republic Club. The speech was a clever campaign strategy that McCarthy used to bring attention to himself. In this speech, McCarthy claimed that there were around two hundred and five government workers that were working for the Communist regime. McCarthy’s speech was yet another sign of how corrupt McCarthy was because his speech was plagiarized from one given to the House earlier that year. In fact, Richard Nixon gave the same speech to the House of Representatives earlier that year.

McCarthy’s Wheeling speech became one of his claims to fame and the start of his Red Scare. The speech did not receive the national attention that McCarthy desired, but he would not let the subject die. While in Salt Lake City, Utah, he restated that he had a list of people in the government that were a threat to the American way. While giving this speech, his lie seemed to grow; he now claimed that he had two hundred and seven names of communist conspirators. This was only two more than the original number; it seemed like a small thing, but it was only the beginning. The small lie showed that McCarthy was willing to exaggerate to get attention.

Another part of McCarthy’s Wheeling speech that was shocking was his blatant attack on Secretary of Defense George Catlett Marshall. McCarthy’s speech was made into a book a year later: *America’s Retreat from Victory*. The book aired dirty laundry on Marshall. While McCarthy’s actions may seem deceitful, he was not wrong about the things he was saying about Marshall and his secrets. Yet, he was going after a very popular man and was warned about doing so: “Marshall has been built into a great hero in the eyes of the people that you will destroy yourself politically if you lay hands on the laurels of this great man” (McCarthy 3). This warning did not stop him, nor did it really come to fruition, and McCarthy became an unstoppable force. With the Wheeling speech and McCarthy’s book against Marshall and the Marshall Plan, McCarthy started his Red Scare Witch Hunt.

This witch hunt began in the state department, where McCarthy said most of the “spies” were located. When investigations began many lives were destroyed. People were put on trial, and it hurt their reputations, many lost their jobs. These people were accused of disloyalty and treason. No one was killed for their “crime,” but many lost their jobs, and some even lost their families. It is true that some of the people charged were actually guilty, but more were not.

Another problem was McCarthy and his blacklisting of people. Blacklisting led to the destruction of the lives of people who had no direct connection to politics; they were just very outspoken in their opinions. Many of the people that were blacklisted were people that worked in the entertainment business. Many actors and actresses were put on these lists, proving that McCarthy would go after anyone. Communism had actually been a strong presence in Hollywood since probably before World War Two. In the article “Red Hollywood”, it is revealed that high ranking writers and actors in Hollywood were sympathetic to the communist cause dating back to at least 1934, if not earlier. It was Stalin’s desire to use Hollywood to help overthrow the Capitalist government of the United States. Even actors such as Charlie Chaplin were for communism. Chaplin’s support went so far as stating, “Thank God for Communism” (Jeffreys 3).

The Hollywood Communist party was the first to come up with idea of blacklisting before the government got to it. They blacklisted actors such as John Wayne and even the future president Ronald Reagan. It was not until 1947 that McCarthy and the government really looked into the lives of the Hollywood communists. The investigation only came up with nineteen communist followers that were in the Hollywood folds. These nineteen people were even able to gain sympathy from famous people such as Katharine Hepburn. The nineteen of them were able to convince people that McCarthy was wrongly accusing them. They said that the government was trying to impinge on their right to freedom of speech. Yet it was later revealed that all nineteen were in fact communists.

Nine of the accused came clean about what they were doing while ten refused to do so; these ten came to be known as the ‘Hollywood Ten’. These ten were then sentenced to one year in prison for the crime of contempt of court. After these trials, Hollywood put a ban on hiring anyone who was even thought to be a communist. The ban brought destruction to the lives of many, even those who were not communists. With these changes, the careers of the ‘Hollywood Ten’ should have ended as well; yet this was not the case. Many of the communists were protected by friends and family and went on to become even more famous. One such instance was with the screenwriter, Dalton Trumbo, who was able to win an Oscar after the whole ordeal. This story is just one example of how McCarthy and his tactics hurt the fight against communism more than anything else.

After McCarthy’s claims that the State Department was and had been employing people that were questionable, an all-out investigation was started. This investigation was handled by the Tydings Committee, headed by democratic senator Millard Tydings. The Tydings committee was a subcommittee to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, founded in 1950. The committee’s main objective was to looking into McCarthy’s claims about disloyalty in the State Department. The unspoken objective was the desire to put an end to “McCarthy’s charges” (Buckley 67) and stop McCarthy before more damage could be done. With this newly appointed task, out of the Tydings Committee came the famous nine public cases that brought McCarthy a great deal of power.

McCarthy had dug himself into a hole with his Wheeling speech and subsequent speeches that followed. He kept getting into trouble because he kept changing the number of communist spies. Finally, in front of the Senate, he said that there were eighty-one people on his list. Yet there were many who did not fully believe him and kept asking him for the actual names of the people that he was bringing charges against. He at first was very reluctant to reveal these names, but in the end nine names were given and nine cases were publicly tried by the Tydings Committee. These nine cases made McCarthy famous.

McCarthy did not necessarily have strong cases against all of the nine accused; he had reasonable doubt in the character of all of them. Yet he did have a good case against one man, Owen Lattimore. Lattimore was known for writing pro-communist papers and was even friends with known communist party members. The committee did not see it that way, though, and in the end said that McCarthy’s condemning witness nothing more than a person speaking hearsay and that Lattimore was cleared of all charges. This pattern held true for all nine of the public cases: the Tydings Committee would hear the testimony, and then clear the people that were being charged. The Tydings Committee’s final verdict was that McCarthy’s claims were just a “fraud and a hoax” (Buckley 62). But this was not the end to McCarthy and his fight against communism.

McCarthy also faced other opposition from within the government. President Truman was in office during McCarthy’s rise to power and watched with deep misgivings about the situation. At the time, Truman’s administration was unsure how to respond to McCarthy’s claims; they could either examine his findings, or ignore McCarthy’s claims. Either way was a trap. The first way would indicate that McCarthy was not lying, and give the nation reason to believe that there was substance to the claims of disloyalty within the State Department. The second option could potentially have looked like a cover up, which the administration did not need, as the people already mistrusted them for past issues. In the end, they allowed the investigations to take place, in hopes of quieting McCarthy. But Truman had to deal with McCarthy much more than he had ever wanted. Truman was often asked: “Does State know if McCarthy has anything the House of Representatives didn’t have two years ago?” (Oshinsky 111). Truman became furious at the implication that a Senator was able to get his hands on information that even the House was unable to obtain. He was angry enough to write a letter to McCarthy about what he thought, but an assistant, thankfully, stopped him from sending it. The assistant warned Truman that the tone of the letter was damaging and that not everything that was in it was based on fact. Sending the letter would have hurt Truman more than it would have helped him, and could possibly have destroyed his credibility. So though Truman disliked McCarthy, he had no choice but to sit by and hope for the best.

The next president to deal with McCarthy was Dwight Eisenhower, who took office in 1953. Eisenhower’s victory was one that brought change, because he was the first Republican to be elected in twenty years. He even had gone campaigning with McCarthy through Wisconsin. This was a bad experience for Eisenhower, who developed a great dislike for McCarthy. He had actually tried to escape McCarthy by having Wisconsin taken off of his campaign itinerary, but the Republican National Committee would not allow it.

While on this part of his campaign trail, Eisenhower stated that he did not agree with McCarthy’s methods, but by the end he had to be careful not to touch the subject because McCarthy was rude in return. While campaigning with McCarthy, Eisenhower was faced with a personal issue. McCarthy had, and still was openly attacking Marshall and his plan. While on the trail Eisenhower refused to defend Marshall from McCarthy for fear of what McCarthy might do to him. This refusal caused Eisenhower personal injury and the loss of respect from others. People started questioning his courage. This unfortunately was not the last time that Eisenhower stood by and allowed McCarthy free reign.

While Eisenhower was in power, the Senate appointed McCarthy chairman of a committee in order to try and appease him during his second term as Senator. McCarthy was made chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operation. The Senate gave him this position in the hopes that McCarthy could do no more harm than he already had in that job. It was becoming clear that even Senators within McCarthy’s own party were starting to fear just how far McCarthy was willing to go. So they were trying to stop him in the only way they knew how. Unfortunately, the Committee of which McCarthy was chair had the subcommittee, the Subcommittee on Investigation, which McCarthy used to full advantage by further investigating for communists within the government itself.

Not all of McCarthy’s opposition came from his fellow Senators or inside the government. He faced many people that held positions of power in the media, particularly, that did not agree with his actions. One of McCarthy’s most persistent attackers was Robert C. Hartnett, S.J. (Society of Jesuit). Hartnett was the editor in chief of the magazine, *America*, during the McCarthy era. Hartnett was not a fearful man, and held his own opinions higher than that of others. He proved this by attacking McCarthy while others were too afraid to do so. He seemed to have the same up and down career as McCarthy did. While McCarthy was in office and going after communists, Hartnett was going after McCarthy. While McCarthy was facing problems with fellow senators, Hartnett was facing issues with fellow Catholics. It seemed that during this era, Catholics agreed with McCarthy and supported him. This caused problems in Hartnett’s fight against McCarthy, but it did not stop him. Yet in the end, both men seemed to be losing everything. When McCarthy and McCarthyism came to an end, so did Hartnett’s anti-McCarthy writings. It was said that Hartnett seemed to be living in a fog – that he was very confused. The most heartbreaking similarity between the two men was that when they left their jobs, they left with no friends and extremely exhausted.

The most famous attacks against McCarthy came from Edward Murrow. Murrow, along with co-producer Fred Friendly, publicized *SEE IT NOW*, a report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. This report was really a retaliation against McCarthy for an unspoken threat that he and his people made against Murrow. Earlier in his life, Murrow helped sponsor a seminar on “American Professors Trained by Soviets, Teach in U.S. Schools,” (Oshinsky 398); this apparently made him a threat to McCarthy and his cause. McCarthy never openly said anything about Murrow, but the threat was still there, and Murrow refused to sit in fear. So he went on air and openly attacked McCarthy’s methods for his fight against Communism. This episode contained mainly video clips of McCarthy, but nonetheless got the point across: “this is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy’s methods to keep silent” (Oshinsky 399). It was also not the only episode of *See It Now* that was dedicated to anti-McCarthy propaganda. It was, however, the *See It Now* episode that would become the most famous, with its immortalized send off, “good night and good luck.” Years later, this story was turned into the movie *Good Night, and Good Luck.*

The last and just as famous attack on McCarthy came from the playwright, Arthur Miller. Miller’s attack was not as open as the other two but was just as powerful. He critiqued McCarthy in his play, *The Crucible*. The play was meant as a parallel to the Red Scare. The plot was based on the Salem Witch Hunts. This was Miller’s way of saying that what McCarthy was doing was nothing more than a modern day witch hunt. But McCarthy’s methods soon gained a name of their own: McCarthyism.

The term McCarthyism was coined during this time, possibly during the nine public cases. McCarthyism is a derogatory term that means to wrongfully accuse someone of wrong doing or disloyalty. This term was extremely damaging for McCarthy because it was derived from his own name. The term of McCarthyism now seems to mean a time of hysteria that brings out the worst in people. With it comes a time when brother will give up brother to protect himself from some unseen force attacking his homeland. McCarthy’s ability to use words to strike fear into people was one of his strong points, but McCarthy’s inability to stop while ahead was also his undoing.

McCarthy’s “fatal” action was his attack on the United States army. McCarthy had been receiving information that something was amiss within the Army Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth. It was when he started his investigation that he signed his own political death warrant. His “death blow” came when he was interrogating General Zwicker. Zwicker was a hero from World War Two, another national hero that McCarthy went after openly and without remorse. While McCarthy was questioning Zwicker, a fight began to brew. McCarthy asked loaded questions and snapped when Zwicker answered in kind. Near the end of the question session, McCarthy started asking questions about Zwicker’s former superior that Zwicker could not answer without incriminating himself. It was then that McCarthy ruined himself. He openly attacked Zwicker’s intelligence and told him that he was not worthy of wearing a uniform. When Zwicker’s superiors – superiors the White House – heard about this incident, it brought McCarthy’s career to an end.

McCarthy added yet another nail to his coffin with an outburst during the Army-McCarthy hearings. These hearings were the Army’s retaliation to McCarthy’s wrongful treatment of top members of the United States Army. The Committee hoped to learn whether McCarthy and his committee had gone too far, and whether there were members of the Army that tried to either blackmail or bribe their way out of McCarthy’s investigations. These investigations did not end well for McCarthy; he showed his true colors while Roy Cohn, one of his fellow members on the subcommittee, was on the stand. Joe Welch was questioning Cohn; his line of questioning was about Cohn’s belief. He was asking what Cohn believed about getting rid of the communist problem and how fast he was willing to do so, and when he asked the question: “And whenever you learn of them from now on, Mr. Cohn, I beg of you, will you tell somebody about them quick?” (Oshinsky 461), all hell broke loose. McCarthy jumped into the questioning and started attacking Welch. Welch tried to get McCarthy to listen to him but was unable to sooth the rampaging beast that McCarthy had become. Welch finally stopped his line of questions and told McCarthy to call his next witness. This was considered to be one of the cruelest things that McCarthy had ever done. Later on Welch admitted that he was almost in tears because of the way McCarthy was treating him. McCarthy’s outburst cost him dearly.

McCarthy was in the end censured by his fellow senators and left the senate feeling betrayed and mistreated. At his last meeting with his subcommittee, he let out his frustration by making himself into a martyr. His last order of business was to apologize to the public for failing to take down the communist problem within the nation. McCarthy was humiliated by the censure, but his physical decline was even more of a problem. He stopped caring about everything and his life turned into a living nightmare. His only saving grace was his wife, who stayed by his side through it all. They even adopted a daughter in 1957 and named her Tierney Elizabeth McCarthy. This seemed to help bring McCarthy back to life. Yet that did not last long; he got into a bad business deal and later lost everything that he had been saving. This led him back to drinking, which he eventually killed him on May 2, 1957.

Now that the Venona Documents have been released, we know that there were in fact Communists within the government like McCarthy believed. Yet McCarthy and his methods were so ruthless and irresponsible that they actually hurt the government’s investigations against communism. But seeing these documents, it is possible to see that McCarthy was not wrong; he simply conducted his investigation in the wrong way.

McCarthy as a person was not a good man. There are many examples in McCarthy’s biography that show McCarthy as a self-centered and power hungry man. He was a compulsive liar, telling falsehoods many times even before he became a senator. Yet, McCarthy was only human; he had a family and loved them as best that he could. He had a devoted wife and adopted a little girl who helped almost heal him after his fall from grace with the government and the public. Lastly, the uncovering of the Venona documents shows that McCarthy was not completely wrong. It was also shown that within Hollywood, there were communists, some that he was able to stop and others that continued to be predominant within the workings of the entertainment business. So what is the final verdict?

It was quoted that: “‘there were a lot of spies in the government, but not all in the State Department,” Lamphere said. However, “The problem was that McCarthy lied about his information and figures. He made charges against people that weren’t true. McCarthyism harmed the counterintelligence effort against the Soviet threat because of the revulsion it caused. All along, Hoover was helping him,” (Kessler 1). In short, McCarthy’s desire for power ended up hurting everyone and stopped the government from finding real threats. McCarthy was a man of many ambitions, lies, right ideas, and poor methods.