

Congressman Robert McClory and Watergate

U.S. Congressman Robert McClory was a well-respected politician with strong ties to Lake Bluff, Lake Forest and the Lake County area. McClory's career began as Village Attorney in Lake Bluff, where he lived with his wife Audrey and their three children. In November 1949, Robert McClory announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination to the Illinois House. His campaign steering committee was headed by Elmer B. Vliet, founder of the Historical Society as well as namesake for Lake Bluff's Vliet Museum. McClory won election to the Illinois House in 1950, going on to serve in the State Senate from 1952 to 1960.

Several years later, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives where he served from 1963 until 1983. Shortly after his arrival in Washington, he shared the excitement of meeting President Kennedy and partying at a White House ball in a newsletter to his constituents, commenting that "the White House is, by far, the best place in Washington in which to dance."

When the McClorys moved to Washington, they rented their Lake Bluff home on Prospect (once part of the Methodist summer camp and built in the late 1890s) and bought a townhouse in the Capitol Hill district. Mrs. McClory recalled that she could tell whether her husband would be home for dinner by climbing to their third floor and out onto the balcony. From atop their townhouse she could see the Capitol dome. If the light beneath the Freedom statue was glowing at night, it meant Congress was still in session and that he would be late for dinner.

A highlight of their time in Washington was August 1966 when the McClorys entertained over 100 guests at home shortly before the marriage of President Lyndon Johnson's daughter Luci to Patrick Nugent of Waukegan, formerly a constituent of McClory. They entertained Nugent relatives and Illinois wedding guests.

When Audrey McClory died in September 1967, a memorial service was held at the Union Church in Lake Bluff. In 1969, Robert McClory married Doris Hibbard, still a resident in the area.

McClory was the second-ranking Republican on the House Judiciary Committee during the Watergate hearings. *Time* magazine called him the "most anguished member of the Judiciary committee," trying to decide articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon. According to *Time*, McClory played a moderating role between Democrats and die-hard GOP loyalists. McClory voted against the article that accused Nixon of obstruction of justice, unconvinced that the President was personally involved in criminal wrongdoing. However, he cast his "aye" vote on two other articles citing Nixon for abuse of power and contempt of Congress. Ultimately, the Judiciary committee's vote at the end of July 1974 directly led to Nixon's resignation on August 9.

McClory's Congressional seat was eliminated following the 1980 census redistricting, after which he denounced the reshaping of Illinois districts as "blatantly political." Rather than run in

1982 against another redistricted Republican, John Porter, he chose to retire. In announcing his retirement at 74, McClory said, "I don't relish a divisive, bitter, expensive and potentially self-defeating campaign against another younger and capable Republican colleague."

Following his retirement from Congress he worked for the law firm of Baker & McKenzie in Washington. On July 24, 1988, McClory collapsed and died of a heart attack at age 80. That same morning he had been out jogging. A memorial service was held at the Lake Bluff Methodist church.

Doris sought a lasting memorial to honor her husband's service and dedication to the Lake County area. She worked for eight years to rename the Lake County Bike Path the "Robert McClory Bike Path" since he was an avid outdoorsman and bicyclist. The path extends from the Wisconsin border through all of Lake County ending at the Cook County line. In addition, she has endowed the McClory internship at Dartmouth College, where he graduated in the class of 1930. These funds are used to sponsor one intern each year in a Congressional internship.

Congressman McClory donated his Watergate files to the Lake Forest College library in 1983. These fourteen boxes include copies of volumes of Judiciary Committee documents along with his marginal notes reflecting his thorough review of the voluminous material. Also included are his penciled notes from the hearings and thousands of letters from constituents and his replies to them concerning the impeachment proceedings. McClory's daughter Beatrice and several of her children graduated from the College. McClory was instrumental in Lake Forest College being designated a partial federal documents depository in 1964.