

TRIBUTES

A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT JACKSON BY HIS NEPHEW

*Harold Jackson Adams**

In the courtroom or out of it, Robert Jackson was a remarkable man. This judgment, however, is not entirely objective since he was my uncle. From an early age, he was his own man. Although his father insisted that he become a doctor, he was determined instead to become a lawyer. When his father refused financial assistance, young Robert borrowed money from his uncle and headed for Albany Law School where he completed the course in a single year.

It might seem that at the time he would have been far too busy studying to have much of a social life. He somehow managed, however, to meet a bright and most attractive young lady named Irene Gerhardt, who a few years later became Mrs. Robert Jackson. And this she did despite her mother's stern pronouncement that "he's too skinny, and he's never going to amount to anything!"

Upon his father's death, the twenty-three-year-old attorney assumed responsibility for his mother and the younger of his two sisters, eleven-year-old Helen, to whom he became guardian. In 1927, it was my good fortune to become the son of Helen Jackson Adams and thereby the nephew of Robert Jackson. Having been close to my mother for so many years, he became closer to me than he otherwise might have.

Early in 1945, my Frewsburg (New York) High School principal asked me to invite Justice Jackson to speak at the graduation ceremony in June. The Justice readily accepted. But in May he wrote to tell me that he would be unable to come, having received "orders from just a little higher source."

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The higher source, of course, was President Truman, and the "orders" were for the Justice to serve as Chief Prosecutor of the Nazi war criminals.

In September of the following year, I was in the Army and stationed near Munich when unexpectedly I was ordered to report to Justice Jackson in Nuremberg. He had arranged this so that I could be there to witness the sentencing of the convicted Nazis. At the time, there was little opportunity to talk with him in private, but it was my feeling that he was well pleased with the outcome of the trial. I am sure he realized that Nuremberg was to be his crowning achievement.

Perhaps nothing better characterizes Bob Jackson than the old saying that you can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy. Whether facing the bench or sitting on it, this country lawyer brought common sense and practicality to every case. He also brought with him a ready wit, a keen sense of humor, and a magnificent command of the English language, both written and spoken.

He was a voracious reader who penciled notes in the margins of every book he perused. The notes, like his personal letters, were in a distinctive, easily readable handwriting. He liked to dance and he enjoyed music. He especially enjoyed the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, though whether more for Sullivan's pleasant melodies or Gilbert's uproarious lyrics is uncertain. He was an outdoorsman. He was a hiker and a fisherman. He was, above all, a horseman.

Except when working in his garden, Robert Jackson was uncommonly well dressed, usually having a colorful kerchief in his breast pocket and often wearing a bow tie. He was once cited as one of the ten best-dressed men in America. His attire, however, did not account for the iconic welcome he received everywhere he went. His presence and personality were such that, upon entering a room, he promptly became the focus of attention, whether among dignitaries or people to whom he was a total stranger.

He was a friendly man whose life was full of warm relationships. As a lawyer, he was a close friend to many of his clients. He was a friend to his associates, his neighbors, and the people who worked for him. Typical of those friendships was the one with his gardener at Hickory Hill who, following the Justice's death, drove from Virginia to Frewsburg simply to pay his respects at the Jackson gravesite.

Among my most cherished memories are those of walking and

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talking with the Justice, of riding horseback and picnicking with him, of visiting him in Washington and having lunch with him in Nuremberg. It is with many fond recollections and enormous pride that I pay this tribute to the great man who was my Uncle Bob.