

THAT TWINKLE IN HIS EYES

*Alma Soller McLay**

Robert H. Jackson will undoubtedly be remembered in history as a founder of International Law. I will always remember him as a kind, gentle man with twinkling eyes.

I was fortunate enough to meet a personnel director on her way to lunch who was thinking about how she could find a capable secretary. She needed someone who would be available within a week to accompany the first contingent of Justice Jackson's staff, who were leaving for England, to prepare cases against the major German War Criminals. I had just returned from two years in Alaska and looked like a likely candidate. She asked if I would consider going out of the Country again. I had an interview that afternoon and was busy the following week (in addition to my secretarial duties) getting a passport, getting shots and meeting with the other seventeen people who would be on that first airplane, which left June 18, 1945 at 2:00 p.m.

My first meeting with Justice Jackson was the Sunday before departure when we were all invited to his home in McLean, Virginia for a lawn party luncheon. There were swings on the large trees in the lawn and I remember someone asking if Justice Jackson had grandchildren. He replied, with a decided twinkle in his eyes, "the swings are for me. . .that's where I do my thinking."

After departing from Andrews Air Force Base, we had a stopover at the Goose Bay Labrador Air Force Base where Justice Jackson hosted a dinner for the group. He was a wonderful host and storyteller with a great sense of humor. Just before we left the plane in England, the word was passed around that we were all to meet at the Claridge's Hotel the next morning at 9:00 a.m. to go together to the American Embassy to meet John Winant, the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain. I thought it was unusual that the whole staff would be presented to our Ambassador, but I soon found that Justice Jackson treated everyone alike, whether you

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were an attorney, secretary, or diplomat.

After the prosecution was completed, Roger Barrett and Bill Jackson were assigned to publish the actual data from the prosecution's case. As Justice Jackson said, no one would believe the facts unless they actually had access to the documents. Since I worked in the document room, I was sent back to the Pentagon to assist in the compilation of the documents, which became a ten-volume (1000 page each) set of books.¹ Needless to say, I became an editor by necessity. This process took about four years and required occasional coordination with Justice Jackson personally. He always had time for me, despite his full time duties as Supreme Court Justice.

My most memorable meeting with Justice Jackson was through another publication to be done by the U.S. State Department. It would record the negotiations among England, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, that had resulted in an agreement on how to try the Nazi War Criminals. Justice Jackson's secretary called to invite me to lunch with him, and said that he wanted to talk to me about another publication. After lunch he told me that he had been discussing with representatives of the State Department the probability of publishing a book concerning the four power conferences in England. He said that the State Department would furnish both an editor and the funds, and that we would provide the material and work with them in the publication. Justice Jackson said that he was counting on me to be his representative. As we were getting down to the details of how and when this was to be done he said, with that twinkle in his eyes, "there's one small problem that I hope you can solve for us, the material is in a box full of shorthand notebooks, it's never been transcribed." And so for many weeks I had the privilege of working in his office and I succeeded in transcribing the contents of the four power conferences, which centered on written submissions by each country.²

Justice Jackson enjoyed the ordinary people around him. While I was working in his office, I can remember his joy over receiving a gift of a smoked turkey. He immediately invited his office staff,

¹ See OFFICE OF UNITED STATES CHIEF OF COUNSEL FOR PROSECUTION OF AXIS CRIMINALITY, NAZI CONSPIRACY AND AGGRESSION (Roger W. Barrett & William E. Jackson eds., 1946). Alma Soller McLay is recognized in the Preface of Volume 1 at page xviii.

² See ROBERT H. JACKSON, REPORT OF ROBERT H. JACKSON, UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MILITARY TRIALS, LONDON, 1945 (1949). Alma Soller McLay is recognized in the Preface at page XII.

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their husbands or wives and his driver to dinner at his house that night.

It was a great privilege to have worked with Justice Jackson. I am sure I share this opinion with people around the world who may have had any participation in the international tribunal activities. And I will never forget those twinkling eyes!