

## Wedding in Cold Spring Harbor (1944)

*John Q. Barrett\**

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On September 24, 1944, Ensign William Eldred Jackson (United States Navy Reserve), age 25, and Nancy-Dabney Roosevelt, age 21, married in Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York.

The wedding, occurring on a Sunday night during wartime, was not a large affair. The couple married in St. John's Church, located near the Turkey Lane home of Nancy's parents, Lieutenant Colonel Archibald B. Roosevelt (U.S. Army) and Grace Lockwood Roosevelt. Lt. Col. Roosevelt had been in active military service, and seriously wounded, in the Pacific Theater. That September, he somehow made it home, quite ill, only shortly before the wedding.

Cold Spring Harbor is a bit east of Oyster Bay, a town that was a childhood home of Archie, his siblings and his parents. His father, Colonel (and also President of the United States) Theodore Roosevelt, had died in 1919, a few years before Nancy's birth. In 1944, her grandmother, former First Lady Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt, age 83, was still living in her home, Sagamore Hill, and she was a beaming wedding guest.<sup>1</sup>

So were Bill Jackson's parents, Justice Robert H. Jackson and Irene Gerhardt Jackson. Travelling north from Virginia, they attended the wedding and then the reception dinner that followed at the home of Archie and Grace.

The Reverend Albert Lucas, the headmaster of St. Albans School in Washington, D.C., Bill's *alma mater*, officiated at the wedding. Nancy was attended by her sisters and others. Bill's best man was his father,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Nancy Roosevelt Is Bride of Ensign; Grandchild of Late President, Daughter of General* [sic], *Wed to W.E. Jackson, Jurist's Son*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 25, 1944, at 20.

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Robert Jackson. Canon Lucas remembered, years later, what a “tribute that conveyed to all present at the ceremony.”<sup>2</sup> (I believe that it was a tribute in both directions, son-to-father and father-to-son.)



Bill and Nancy were married for fifty-five years, until his death in 1999. She died in 2010. I was lucky to know each of them, and to benefit from their generous friendship. I still do. And I think of them often, including on their wedding anniversary.

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For a 2003 film clip of Nancy Jackson recalling her father-in-law, whom she adored (you’ll see, and the feeling was very mutual), [click here](#).

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from The Rev. Albert H. Lucas to William E. Jackson, Oct. 10, 1954. See generally E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr., *The Rev. Albert H. Lucas*, available at <http://community.stalbansschool.org/page.aspx?pid=899>. Prettyman was St. Albans ’43, six years after Bill Jackson ’37, and clerked for Justice Jackson at the Supreme Court during 1953-54.