

# Birthday Bonds, Appreciation, Treasure

*John Q. Barrett\**

Copyright © 2012 by John Q. Barrett.  
All rights reserved.

February 13, 2012, marked the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert Houghwot Jackson's birth on the Jackson farm in Spring Creek Township, Warren County, Pennsylvania.

On Saturday, February 13, 1892, deep snow covered the roads of Spring Creek and its northwestern Pennsylvania region. Angelina Houghwot Jackson, age 25 and in labor, remained in her farmhouse bed that morning. Her husband of seven years, William Eldred Jackson, age 29, went out to the barn, hitched horses to a cutter—a sleigh—and drove a short distance down the valley to the home of his young aunt, Lena Jackson. Will Jackson summoned Lena (pronounced LEE-na) and drove her back to the farmhouse to attend to Lina (pronounced LIE-na).

Will then set off again in his cutter, this time driving up the valley through miles of snowdrifts to Columbus, Pennsylvania. He located a local doctor, Milton Hughes Christie, age 33. He had moved to the area recently, after earning his M.D. degree in 1888 at Wooster University in Cleveland and then briefly practicing medicine in that city.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Christie, driving his own cutter pulled by two bay horses, followed Will Jackson back down the valley and into the Jackson farm barnyard. Dr. Christie entered the house, warmed his fingers over the kitchen's wood stove and then climbed the stairs to assist Lina. Soon enough all was well, including for new baby Robert.

\* \* \*

---

\* Professor of Law, St. John's University School of Law, New York City, and Elizabeth S. Lenna Fellow, Robert H. Jackson Center, Jamestown, New York ([www.roberthjackson.org](http://www.roberthjackson.org)). An earlier version of this essay was posted to my Jackson Email List on February 13, 2012.

For an archive of selected Jackson List posts, many of which have document images attached, visit [www.stjohns.edu/academics/graduate/law/faculty/profiles/Barrett/JacksonList.sju](http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/graduate/law/faculty/profiles/Barrett/JacksonList.sju).

To subscribe to the Jackson List, which does not display recipient identities or distribute their email addresses, send a note to [barrettj@stjohns.edu](mailto:barrettj@stjohns.edu).

<sup>1</sup> See 2 JOHN MILLER, A TWENTIETH CENTURY HISTORY OF ERIE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA: A NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF ITS HISTORICAL PROGRESS, ITS PEOPLE, AND ITS PRINCIPAL INTERESTS 343-44 (1909) (entry on Milton Hughes Christie, M.D.), available at [www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/john-miller.shtml](http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/john-miller.shtml). For information on Wooster medical schools in Cleveland at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see [www.cwru.edu/artsci/dittrick/museum/smallpox/schools.html](http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/dittrick/museum/smallpox/schools.html).

Almost fifty years later, on June 12, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent to the United States Senate his nomination of Robert H. Jackson, then Attorney General of the U.S., to become an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Within days, Jackson received a handwritten letter. The writer showed no doubt that the Senate would confirm the nomination:

Hon Robert H Jackson  
Associate Justice of the Supreme Court  
My dear Robert,

I wish to congratulate you on your elevation to the Supreme Court which in my estimation is one of the greatest honors which could fall to the lot of man.

My family join with me in congratulating you.

Give my regards to your wife and family and especially to your Mother who I know is very proud of her boy.

Sincerely yours,  
M H Christie<sup>2</sup>

In 1941, Dr. Christie was retired, living outside of Washington, D.C. with one of his sons (himself a prominent physician<sup>3</sup>) and seeing Robert Jackson on occasion. When Jackson wrote back the next week, his reply also evinced no doubt that he would be confirmed:

My dear Dr. Christie:

Delighted to get your letter of congratulation. I look forward to the work of the Court which is outside of the field of politics and administrative work and is exclusively professional. It will give me a little opportunity to get up

---

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Dr. M.H. Christie to Robert H. Jackson, June 15, 1941, in Robert H. Jackson Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C. ("Jackson Papers, LOC"), Box 119, Folder 1. An image of this letter is at the end of this file.

<sup>3</sup> For information on Dr. Milton Christie's son Dr. Arthur Carlisle Christie, see [www.gcmradiology.com/about/dr\\_christie.php](http://www.gcmradiology.com/about/dr_christie.php).

---

BIRTHDAY BONDS, APPRECIATION, TREASURE

---

home with Mother this summer, which I would not otherwise have had. I look forward to seeing you again in the fall.

With best wishes to you and to the Christie family,

Sincerely,

[/s/ Robert]<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

In early 1949, Dr. Christie's son wrote to Justice Jackson. Noting Jackson's literally "life-long friendship" with Doctor Christie, the son reported the sad news that his father had "passed away a week ago and ... was buried in Corry, Pa. last Wednesday."<sup>5</sup>

Jackson, writing back immediately, said he was

extremely sorry to know that your father has passed away. Somehow I missed it in the newspaper and had not known of it. I would have attended the funeral at all hazards if it had come to my attention. As you know, he was something of a patron saint in my family and my earliest memories are of Dr. Christie, who my parents thought knew all the mysteries of life and who was besought in all our difficulties. I admired and loved him, and it must be a source of great satisfaction to you that his life overlaps yours by so many years. Most of us lose our parents before we really have the maturity to appreciate them.<sup>6</sup>

The son, Doctor Arthur C. Christie, wrote back, thanking Jackson "for the sentiments you express with regard to my father. He admired you greatly and was tremendously proud of the great place you have attained in the nation. My family will always treasure your letter."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Robert H. Jackson to Dr. M.H. Christie, June 21, 1941 (unsigned carbon copy), in *id.* Jackson's father had died in 1915, a few weeks before Robert turned 23. His mother died in 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Dr. Arthur C. Christie to Robert H. Jackson, Jan. 17, 1949, in Jackson Papers, LOC, Box 10, Folder 6. For genealogical notes on Milton Hughes Christie (1858-1949) and his family, see <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/l/u/c/Betty-J-Lucas/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-0022.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Robert H. Jackson to Dr. Arthur C. Christie, Jan. 20, 1949 (unsigned carbon copy), in Jackson Papers, LOC, Box 10, Folder 6. Jackson probably wrote and sent this letter before he attended President Truman's inauguration later on this date.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Dr. Arthur C. Christie to Justice Robert H. Jackson, Jan. 24, 1949, in *id.*



MRS. ARTHUR C. CHRISTIE  
EDNOR  
MARYLAND

Ednor Md June 15 - 41

Dear Robert H Jackson  
Associate Justice of the Supreme  
Court

Dear Robert

I wish to

Congratulate you on your Elevation  
to the Supreme Court - which in  
my estimation is one of the  
greatest honors which could  
fall to the lot of man.

My family join with me in  
Congratulating you.

Give my regards to your  
Wife and family and especially  
to your Mother who I know is  
very proud of her boy.

Sincerely yours

M H Christie