

Father Moritz Fuchs (1925-2018), Nuremberg's Bodyguard, Nuremberg's Spiritual Guard

*John Q. Barrett**

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My friend Father Moritz Fuchs, Jr., truly one of the best people I have ever met, died yesterday, June 19, 2018, in Syracuse, New York. He succumbed to cancer, to a systemic infection, to being just short of age 93, and maybe also, a little bit, to Nazi shrapnel.

This moment is deeply sad for all who knew or knew of Father Fuchs. On the other hand, today he is exactly where he, a man of immense religious faith, worked his whole life to be, and that thought should comfort each of us.

Moritz Fuchs was a farm boy from upstate New York. He learned German from his parents, immigrants from Switzerland. After graduating from high school, he began college, studying engineering, but he soon left for military service.

By November 1944, Private Moritz Fuchs, age 19, was serving as a replacement in the 1st Army Division (the Big Red 1) in Germany's Hürtgen Forest. On November 19, he was wounded by shrapnel from German artillery fire. He was evacuated to England and recovered there.

Private Fuchs, while recovering, quite luckily missed additional weeks of Hürtgen Forest fighting and then the Battle of the Bulge. He then rejoined his unit, fighting on in Germany and into Czechoslovakia.

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FATHER MORITZ FUCHS (1925-2018)

After Nazi Germany's surrender in May 1945, Private Fuchs was assigned to Nuremberg. He was ordered to supervise former SS men, now U.S. prisoners, working to clean up the bomb-damaged city.

That summer, Private Fuchs's commanding officer gave Fuchs a new and wholly unexpected assignment. He was to guard U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, who would be moving imminently to Nuremberg to serve as U.S. chief prosecutor, before the International Military Tribunal, of Nazi war criminals.

Private Fuchs served as Justice Jackson's bodyguard for the entirety of the international Nuremberg trial. During that year, Fuchs lived with Jackson, his son and executive assistant William E. Jackson, and the Justice's secretary Mrs. Elsie Douglas in a requisitioned private home outside of Nuremberg. Fuchs was armed at all times. He slept in the front vestibule of the house. He rode with Justice Jackson to and from the Palace of Justice (the courthouse), the Grand Hotel, and other locations in the area. When Jackson worked in his courthouse office, Fuchs sat



Douglas - Jackson - Fuchs, driver
16 Cyl. Mercedes formerly
Von Ribbontrop's car

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nearby. When Jackson was in court, so was Fuchs, listening to the proceedings, watching everyone in the room, and carrying the only authorized gun in Courtroom 600.



By assignment, Staff Sergeant (following his promotion) Fuchs was proximate to Justice Jackson. Through their shared work and compatible personalities and interests, they became friends. They particularly enjoyed weekend walks and hunting trips in the woods outside Nuremberg—which was where Jackson observed, with relief, that his bodyguard was a good shot.



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After Justice Jackson made his closing statement to the International Military Tribunal in late July 1946, he returned home to Washington while the proceedings concluded and the IMT deliberated and wrote its judgment. Jackson brought Fuchs home on his plane, and then brought him to his house, Hickory Hill, in McLean, Virginia, for a weekend stop on his way to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and discharge from the Army.

And then Fuchs embarked on his vocation. He pursued the religious calling that had become clear to him during the Nuremberg trial. He became a Roman Catholic seminarian, studying for years in preparation for the priesthood. He stayed in contact with Justice Jackson, visiting him at the Supreme Court. As Fuchs's ordination date approached, Jackson made plans to attend. Sadly, he died shortly before he would have seen his "dear Moritz" become a priest. But Mrs. Douglas was present at Father Fuchs's ordination, a moment that spoke to one of Nuremberg's most personal and hopeful results.

Father Fuchs became a Catholic parish priest in New York State. Across six decades, he ministered to and was loved by many.

Sergeant Fuchs (retired) was a proud and tough U.S. Army veteran. Last month, although his health was weak, he proudly participated in the Memorial Day ceremonies in his hometown, Fulton, New York.

Father Moritz Fuchs was an up-close witness to and friend of Robert Jackson and a powerful teacher of Nuremberg in all of its dimensions. That's how I came to meet Father Fuchs. It's what we discussed over many hours, including when we were together almost every year in Jamestown, New York, at the Robert H. Jackson Center.



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We also were together on special trips back to Nuremberg. The final one—he knew, and said, and was completely at peace with the fact, that it was his final one—occurred in November 2015, the 70th anniversary of the trial’s commencement. I had the honor to moderate, in Courtroom 600, a conversation of recollections by Father Fuchs and two former colleagues who also had worked there as young men. As he surveyed the room carefully at the start of that evening, I could see that his eyes saw back clearly to 1945. He shared those memories with a rapt audience.



Private, then Sergeant Fuchs guarded Justice Robert Jackson—well done.

Father Fuchs also, across decades, as priest and friend, guarded humanity and morality. I think of that as him guarding, among other things, Nuremberg’s core meaning—even better done.

Rest in peace, Father Fuchs, and thank you.

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Some links—

- a 2004 Father Fuchs sermon, on Justice Jackson:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jMKb1zsLZQ>;
- a 2017 newspaper profile of Father Fuchs:
<http://www.post-journal.com/news/page-one/2017/05/a-farm-boy-who-became-jacksons-bodyguard/>;
- video of a 2015 Father Fuchs interview, at the Jackson Center: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0X2K64x-bo>; and
- video from a 2010 trip to Nuremberg:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqfmY-iK4hg>.