

Envyng Time for Pleasure Reading (1954)

*John Q. Barrett**

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From his bar admission in 1913 until his appointment to the United States Supreme Court in 1941, Robert H. Jackson was a practicing lawyer, including a very active litigator. From 1913 through 1933, he did most of his litigating in New York State trial and appellate courts, although he also handled various matters in federal courts. Beginning in 1934, when he was first appointed to federal office in Washington, D.C., he did almost all of his litigating in federal trial and appellate courts, including the Supreme Court. Jackson was a gifted and enthusiastic speaker who loved courtroom advocacy and worked hard to do it well. From his first trial forward, he impressed clients, adversaries, judges, and the general community (including reporters and potential clients). At each stage of his career, Jackson's courtroom brilliance and successes played big parts in how fast and far he rose.

Jackson knew that he was a strong advocate, so it is unsurprising that he applied his own high standards to evaluate the advocacy skills of others. As a Supreme Court justice during 1941-1945, he read many lawyers' briefs and heard their oral arguments. In Jackson's view, one of the very best courtroom lawyers he watched in action during these years was Sidney Sherrill Alderman, general solicitor of the Southern Railway System. When President Truman recruited Justice Jackson in Spring 1945 to serve as U.S. chief of counsel to prosecute Nazi war criminals internationally, he recruited Alderman to be his principal assistant.

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Memo 850-45

MEMORANDUM)
No. 850-45)

WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington 25, D. C., 24 May 1945

OFFICE OF UNITED STATES CHIEF OF COUNSEL
FOR PROSECUTION OF AXIS CRIMINALITY

1. Announcement is made of the location of the Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, in The Pentagon, as follows:

Chief of Counsel:	Hon. Robert H. Jackson Associate Justice, United States Supreme Court Room 4E-870. Tel. ext. 72314 and 72315
Assistant to Chief of Counsel:	Mr. Sidney S. Alderman Room 4E-870 Tel. ext. 72314 and 72315
Executive:	Col. M. C. Bernays, GSC Room 4E-870 Tel. ext. 72314 and 72315
Administrative officer:	Capt. R. L. Morgan, AGD Room 4E-869 Tel. ext. 3323

2. The above office will be referred to as "Office Chief of Counsel."

3. A roster of personnel is attached.

(AG 334 (22 May 45))

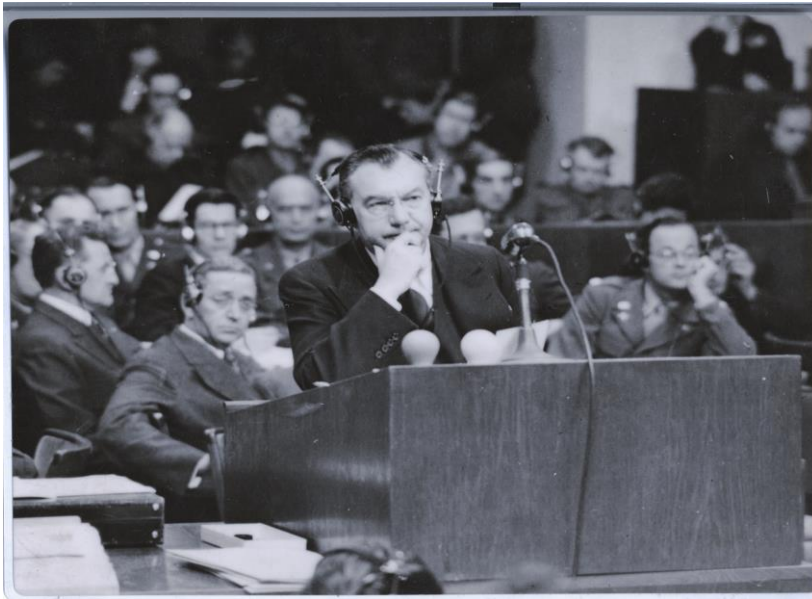
BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

OFFICIAL:
J. A. ULIO
Major General
The Adjutant General

G. C. MARSHALL
Chief of Staff

In Spring 1945, Sidney Alderman worked closely with Justice Jackson in Washington. That continued during diplomatic and legal negotiations in London that summer, and in Nuremberg

beginning that fall. Alderman was in Nuremberg with Jackson from the start of the trial until Alderman returned to the U.S. in June 1946, a few months before the trial concluded. Jackson admired Alderman's strong work at Nuremberg, including in the courtroom, and their uniquely challenging, unprecedented experiences there deepened their friendship. They stayed in regular contact thereafter.



Justice Jackson at the podium, in front of the U.S. prosecution table, in Courtroom 600, Palace of Justice, Nuremberg. Sidney Alderman is to his right.

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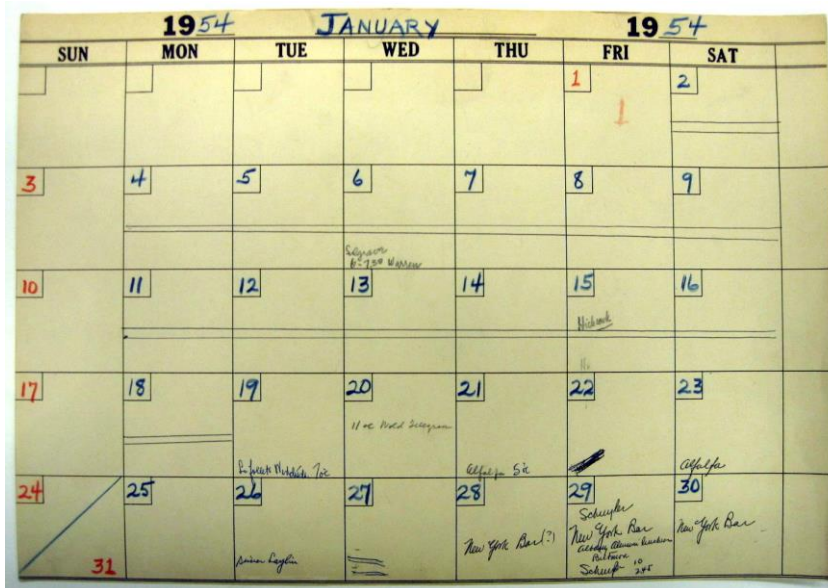
On December 18, 1953, Sidney Alderman spoke at the Bar Association of Robeson County, North Carolina's annual Buck Harris dinner. His address, "Reading Begins at Sixty: A Shakespeare Experience," concerned exactly that—Alderman's experiences, as a man now in his sixties, who was rereading the works of William Shakespeare.

Alderman was proud of his address and he knew that his friend Justice Jackson, who read, knew, and often quoted Shakespeare and who also was in his sixties, would be interested. So Alderman sent Jackson a copy.

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Justice Jackson was busy with Court work, including lots of reading, writing, and conferences. In January 1954, the Justices met in public sessions on nine days, announcing decisions and hearing oral arguments in eighteen cases or groups of cases.

But on January 18, 1954, the Court recessed for the rest of the month. The recess gave the Justices more time to write opinions, to prepare for February oral arguments, and to attend to other matters.



Justice Jackson's January 1954 desktop calendar

On January 28, Justice Jackson took a train from Washington to New York City. He stayed there for three nights. He saw his dentist. He attended, it seems between dental appointments, his alma mater Albany Law School's alumni luncheon. He attended two dinners that were parts of the New York State Bar Association's annual meeting. At the second, a large, black tie event in the Waldorf=Astoria hotel ballroom on Saturday night, January 30, Justice Jackson received the NYSBA's Gold Medal for Distinguished Service in the Law and gave a speech to the large audience.

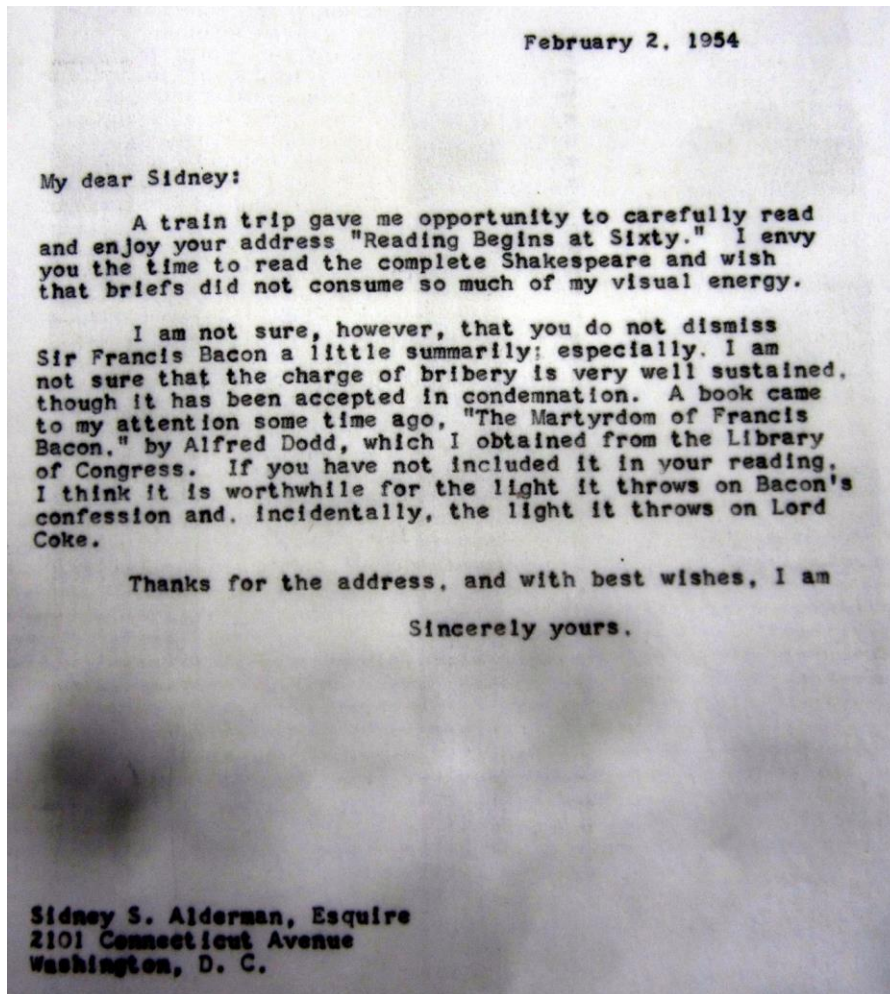
On Sunday, January 31, Justice Jackson took a train back to Washington. He had with him the copy of the "Reading at Sixty"

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address that his friend Sidney Alderman had sent to him. It seems that Jackson read it, and closely, on this train ride home.

The Supreme Court began its February session the next day.

Justice Jackson promptly dictated a letter to Alderman. It was typed up on February 2 and mailed to Alderman at his apartment about four miles away. It shows their friendship, Jackson's love of Shakespeare, and, I think, a little Jackson competitiveness in the realm of erudition:



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Here, from the Jackson List archive, are links to past posts mentioning:

- Sidney Alderman:
<https://thejacksonlist.com/?s=Sidney+Alderman>; and
- William Shakespeare:
<https://thejacksonlist.com/?s=Shakespeare>.