

Private Ballantine's Views of the Great War

David Meyer provides an account based on the "visual diary" of a World War I soldier



In 1960, the last year of his life, F. Lester Ballantine gave away three albums of photographs from his military service in World War I. He had purchased the albums in a stationery store in New York City in 1919. He numbered the linen-bound covers in gold ink and filled the 60 pages in each album with photographs he had taken or collected during the period 1918-1919. Most of the images, including snapshots and 6" X 9" prints, carry Ballantine's captions, handwritten in block

letters with white ink. The album covers and leaves are now worn and curled along the edges, and the ink has become dusty and faint.

F. LESTER BALLANTINE

He was one of the tallest men in his unit. In every formal portrait taken of the 4th Photo Section, IV Corps Observation Group, Second Army of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), Private F. Lester Ballantine stood in the back row. He had registered for the draft in 1917, as America entered the First

World War. He was a salesman for a food wholesaler in New York City at the time and was living with his parents in Maplewood, New Jersey. Called to active duty in March 1918, he was sent to aerial photography school in Rochester, New York, and completed the course in May of that year. By July he was stationed at Ellington Field outside Houston, Texas, where he and the 18 other members of the 4th Photo Section posed together in an airplane hanger, standing in front of a biplane. See *PRIVATE BALLANTINE*, page 3



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There is an ad on television for the Kindle in which a young man boasts about how many "books" he can carry around in his electronic gadget. He is mistaken, of course. He is not carrying around "books." He is carrying around words, and there is a world of difference.

The digital age is upon us and with it, cries that the book is dying. Poppycock. We have been through such shifts before and seen them only enhance what were once considered obsolete practices. Photography freed painters from having to be visual chroniclers. The invention of the halftone freed lithographers and engravers from having to be mere illustrators. So, too, perhaps, the inventions of the digital age will free book designers and printers from having to spend their talents on phone books, catalogs of auto parts and manuals for toaster ovens, not to mention ten-volume compilations of demographical statistics. Electrons allow for instant accessibility and routine updating. They also save trees. But they are not "books."

The Caxton Club is about books because we

celebrate the qualities which the Kindle and the Internet can never embody – permanence and tangibility. I myself still have on my bookshelf the Modern Library edition of *Tom Jones* which I read in high school nearly fifty years ago, an experience so profound it led eventually to my PhD dissertation. The cracks in its binding, the tea and beer stains all over it, anchor that revelation in my memory. And I am hardly unique. As we saw so eloquently in the Club's latest publication, *Other People's Books*, the uses to which people have put their books over the centuries are as significant as the mere "words" which the Kindle supplies so handily and yet so meagerly.

These few thoughts reassure me of our Club's purpose. As we move into our 116th year, I trust books will continue to fascinate, entertain, enlighten and enrapture our present – and future – members, and to provide an anchor for the fellowship which we Caxtonians feel so wonderfully in their presence.

– Bruce H. Boyer



PRIVATE BALLANTINE, from page 1

Ballantine is the third man from the right, 28 years old and handsome, with dark hair and a mustache. His solemn expression belies the fact that he was fortunate to have been assigned to the newly evolving aviation service of the armed forces. First set up as a section of the Signal Corps, within months it would take on its own identity: the Army Air Service.

ELLINGTON FIELD, TEXAS

Ellington Field was a city of tents, barracks and airplane hangars, ranged along intersecting straight-line streets. Everything constructed on the flat, empty landscape was new. From the air you could see the careful alignment of the tents and the most prominent features of the installation: the water tower in its center; a canvas tent large enough to accommodate a three-ring circus, with "enlisted men's club" stenciled on top; and a dozen airplane hangars – all looking empty.

The air service was established by an act of Congress on July 24, 1917. By April of the next year 19 airfields were scattered around the country, from New York to Florida, Minnesota to California and Texas. However, there were few aircraft as production of planes was yet to catch up.

The one and perhaps only highlight of Ballantine's stay at Ellington was the arrival of the "first ambulance plane made in America," freshly painted white with large red crosses. The pilot sat in the rear seat, the sick or wounded patient in front. The plane had stopped at Ellington Field in May 1918 and was the only aircraft in sight when the photograph was taken.



AT FIRST, A TOURIST

By August of that year Ballantine was (in his words) "on the high seas" in a convoy headed for Europe. Ships were camouflaged in broad black stripes extending from their hulls to the barrels of the guns projecting from their decks, all in an effort to break up outlines that could be detected by marauding German submarines searching the horizon for targets. That same month, just before crossing over to France, he briefly became a tourist in Winchester, the ancient capital of England, where he took snapshots of the statue of King Alfred the Great and Winchester's famous cath-

edral. In Tours, an industrial city in northwest France, Ballantine bought postcards of local sights while his curiosity led him to take his own photos of Alsatian girls in native costume and bones exhumed in a graveyard.

ENCAMPED IN FRANCE

Within weeks his unit reached their first wartime duty station outside the farming village of Ourches in southwestern France. Seen from the air, the farm plots offered a varying light and dark, straight and curving pattern due to early and late growth of crops, tilled and untilled soil. Trails, and ruts made by carts or vehicles, crisscrossed the fields. The American aviation encampment was clustered around a main road and disrupted the closest

See PRIVATE BALLANTINE, page 4



On the high seas in August, 1918.



garden plots.

The airfield at Ourches included four hangars, long maintenance sheds and barracks that abutted the main road into the village; outhouses at the end of paths stood prominently in the fields.

Ballantine's "scenes around the camp at Ourches" show crude stone buildings flanking the narrow, unpaved streets of the village. Farmers lead horse-drawn carts. A man and a woman thresh wheat. At the village wash-house on the river, women scrub clothes in the river while a man sits fishing nearby.

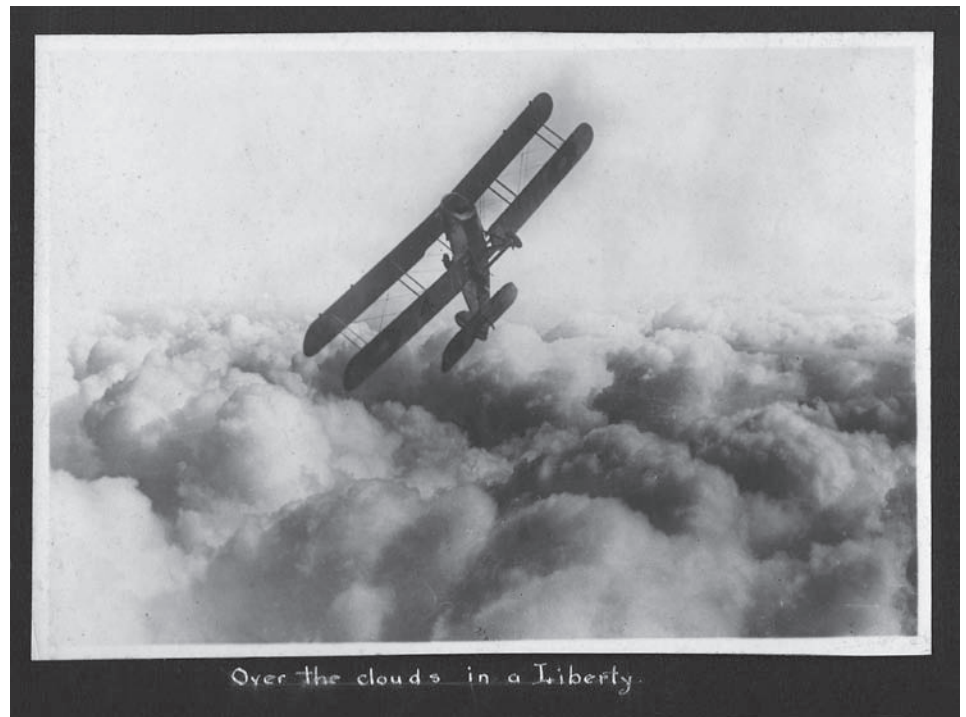
The 4th Photo Section barracks resembled the ubiquitous Quonset huts of World War II. The sides of its sloping, half-barrel roof were nearly covered with sizable rocks, possibly intended as insulation. The photo section's laboratory was concealed with tree branches and bushes cut and propped against the sides of the shed and tossed across its roof.

PLANES AND CRASHES

Ballantine noted another "first" for the Air Service with "two views of the first Liberty plane to fly over the German lines." As the AEF's contribution to the Allied air forces, the Liberty was named for the 400hp engine that powered the plane. The aircraft was an American copy of a British De Havilland DH-4 biplane, designed for photographic and reconnaissance flights and bombing missions. Like most aircraft of the era, the Liberty was constructed of wood, wire and fabric. The cloth, stretched over the plane's wings and its braced wooden body, was waterproofed with



Two views of the first Liberty plane to fly over the German lines.



shellac. Wood struts and guy wires kept the wings rigidly together to add strength.

The fragile wood-and-fabric planes of that era were said to quickly deteriorate when not under shelter, and the probability of their destruction was substantially increased when flown. They were prey to both good and bad weather. Incidents were recorded of planes disintegrating on clear days for no known reasons. Engines and movable parts chronically malfunctioned. Propellers warped, struts and wires lost their tension and alignment. If a fire broke out, both plane and pilot were quickly enveloped. Sometimes a single bullet fired from the ground or from an enemy flier's gun could bring a plane down – or the flier's own gun might do the same. If its synchronizing system failed, rounds shooting through the propeller, rather than between the whirling blades, proved fatal.

Most pilots of the Army Air Service were young and inexperienced. (The majority were trained in France or England with the aircraft of those countries.) Takeoffs and landings were critical, often causing wrecks. In the air, the lightweight craft were buffeted by wind turbulence; pilots were nauseated by castor oil, the lubricant spitting from the plane's engine.

"A Salmson which fell on our field at Ourches," Ballantine wrote below two photographs of a French biplane with its tail in the air and its nose dug into the ground. Other crashes were more serious – and there were many. Ballantine seldom referred to pilot fatalities, but when Major H. B. Anderson, commander of the IV Corps Observation Group

(which included the 4th Photo Section) crashed and survived, notice was taken. "Major Anderson's first crash at Ourches," Ballantine wrote, "from which he escaped uninjured." In the photo a young officer (most likely Anderson) stands smiling next to the broken and tangled mass of what had once been an airplane. Wheels are upended, wings torn apart, and the crushed engine and fuselage are indistinguishable from each other. It appears impossible that anyone could have stepped out of this crash unharmed. A few months later Anderson would not be so fortunate.

AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

Missions varied for the four observation squadrons under Major Anderson's command, but they were all involved in gathering military intelligence. (Helping Allied units direct artillery rounds on German targets was another major role.) Pilots flying visual reconnaissance radioed their reports from the air or were interviewed by an intelligence officer immediately on landing. The 4th Photo Section developed film taken over existing battlefields and occupied territory. Oblique photographs using French-made aerial cameras were shot from the sides or through the floors of the biplanes.

Still another "first" in Ballantine's album is a photograph taken by an American pilot "over German lines at low altitude." The devastated land resembles the surface of the moon. With no trees or vegetation visible, the only signs of life are soldiers peering from trenches and bomb craters in the ground.

Most aerial reconnaissance photographs

were taken at high altitudes. "Two miles above the German lines," one caption read. Another photo is described as "showing German trenches, no-mans land, French trenches and a mine crater." Important details such as the squadron number and photo section responsible for a photograph and the location of the area or town or city's name were printed in a narrow margin within the print. Topographic features were identified and some photos were annotated in white ink directly on the image, showing newly made roads, trenches, barbed wire, gun emplacements, storage areas and the location of troops. As events and changes took place daily, "barbed wire and big gun emplacements" seen in one aerial shot might be in a different place by the time another photograph was taken.

SHARING SOURCES

Many of the photographs Ballantine collected came from sources outside his unit. French forces offered posed shots of their army in the field based on the fact that their uniforms look crisp and clean. "French bomb projecting machine," Ballantine labeled the scene of soldiers clustered behind a mortar. One soldier has positioned the firing tube while another is holding a mortar round. Others stand looking toward an out-of-sight target. Shots of medics attending to the



Major Anderson trying out a German plane.

wounded look both posed and factual.

A photograph Ballantine captioned "a typical French soldier's grave" may have been used for home-front propaganda denouncing German tactics. A bayonet is impaled in the grass in front of a wooden cross stenciled "un brave" (unknown) soldier of the 121st regiment of infantry who had died by "la baionnette."

THE ST. MIHIEL SALIENT

Scenes from behind enemy lines came as a result of the Americans' first offensive against the Germans. The battle known as "the St. Mihiel salient" was named for the village

on the Meuse River in northeastern France which happened to be at the forward edge of the German trenches. The area included the occupied city of Metz and the important iron mining region of Briey. The salient (part of a military front line that projects outward into enemy territory) was shaped like an inverted triangle; it ran 25 miles wide and 15 miles into the French-held line and enabled the Germans to conduct extensive attacks deep into Allied territory. The French had been attempting to regain control of the St. Mihiel salient for four years.

Two prominent names in American military

history were involved in this battle. Major General John J. Pershing commanded the AEF with Colonel William "Billy" Mitchell in charge of air forces. Preparations for the offensive had gone on for months. The attack came on September 12, 1918. Ballantine kept a photograph of a propaganda flier dropped behind German lines after the second day of the Allied drive. It proclaimed that the territory which the Germans had held for four years had been taken by the Americans in 72 hours. A map showed the altered frontlines of the combatants. The salient no longer existed.

The Germans issued their own propaganda. Three photographs are

See PVT. BALLANTINE, page 6



18 Gef Amerikaner

Soldiers can be seen in this picture with no shoes, for they have been taken away by the Germans. Some have tied burlap bags over their feet.

TOUL

As the Allied forces and IV Corps Observation Group advanced, the photo section followed. By October their new location was the aviation field established near the city of Toul on the Moselle River. The lab was set up in a brick building with multiple chimneys that did not appear to need camouflage. Ballantine's "scenes around Toul Field" included outdoor wash stalls, the garbage man with his donkey and cart, the unit's tent with machine gun emplacement, and "a truck which overturned one dark night while taking 40 soldiers to a dance. No one was injured." Beneath a snapshot of two massive wooden casks on the flatbed of a railroad car, Ballantine noted "the dough-boy's delight – 'vin rouge.'"

Troops and equipment moved through the area as they returned from battle.



Captured German plane at Toul field.



Nieuport which landed upside down, badly injuring the pilot.



This plane made a nose-dive thru the roof of a hangar. Neither pilot nor observer was hurt.

Toul Field.

PRIVATE BALLANTINE, from page 5 captioned in the prints "Gefangene Amerikaner" – captured Americans. "Soldiers can be seen in [these] pictures with no shoes," Ballantine wrote, "for they have been taken away by the Germans. Some have tied burlap bags over their feet." Many of the several hundred Allied soldiers pictured were still wearing steel helmets. Although guards with rifles are not in sight, in one photograph the prisoners were being led by a German soldier on horseback carrying a lance. Ballantine believed the photographs had been confiscated from a German soldier.

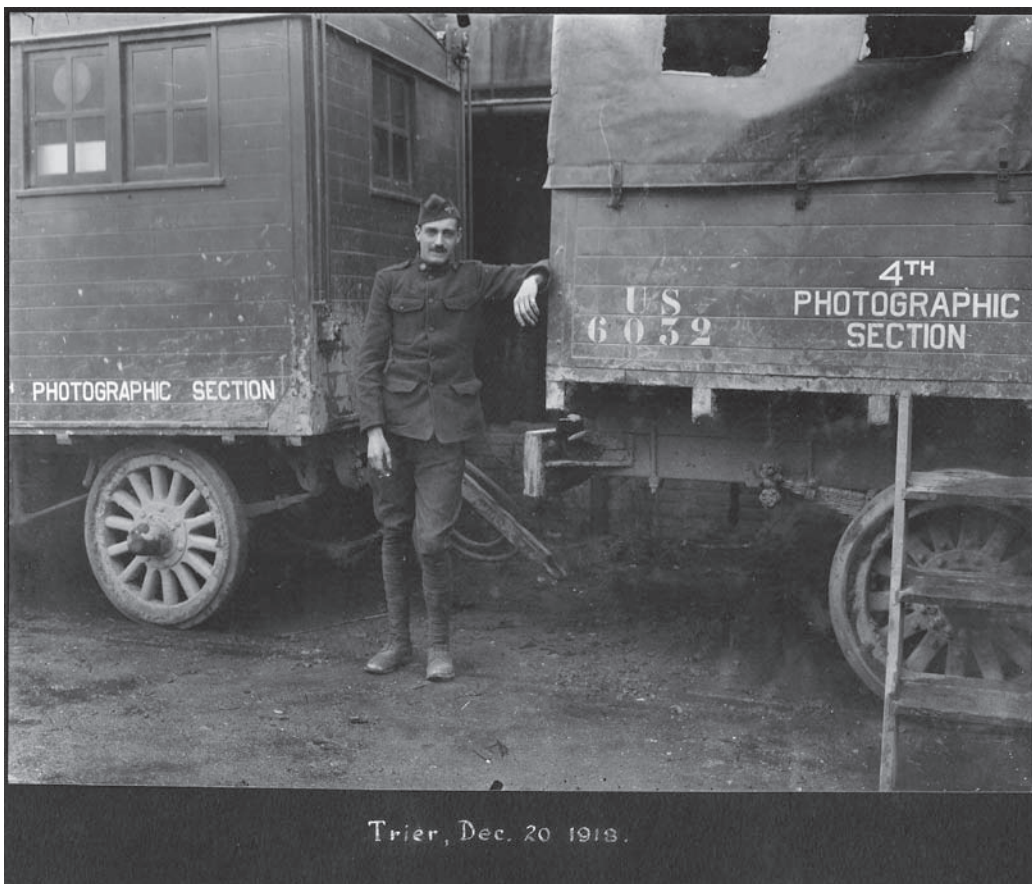
While Allied forces moved into position for the assault on the St. Mihiel salient, members of the 4th took snapshots of the long lines of troops and horse-drawn field artillery pieces passing their camp on the way to the front. The battle – dominated, as always, by artillery – brought a flood of war scenes to the unit and into Ballantine's albums. Captured German photographs revealed both the subterfuges and the carnage of the conflict. A dummy tank provided concealment for a machine gun crew; a hollowed-out tree served as an observation post. Bodies, parts of bodies, and skeletons in remnants of uniforms lay strewn across the barren "no man's land." Bloated corpses resulted from gas attacks; the carcass

of a horse hung in a tree, blown there by an explosion from an artillery shell. Bodies, piled one on top of another, were ranged in a mass grave before burial. As if it were a prelude to so much death, one photograph shows a priest giving communion to German soldiers kneeling with bowed heads.

Captured German aircraft were brought in and a towering British Handley-Page bomber visited, dwarfing the curious who stood beneath its lower wing. Planes also crashed there. Among the wrecks was a French Nieuport biplane "which landed upside down, badly injuring the pilot" and another that



Our Thanksgiving dinner at Mercy-le-Haut, 1918.



“made a nosedive through the roof of a hanger. Neither pilot nor observer was hurt.” Guards were stationed next to captured or crashed planes to prevent the removal of parts or pieces as souvenirs.

Toul put the 4th Photo Section in the vicinity of major battles from the earliest years of the war. Cities having resources and industries vital to both sides still showed the effects of the fighting to take or to hold them four years before. The important railroad center of Nancy was attacked by the Germans in 1914 and suffered heavy bombardment, as did nearby Pont-à-Mousson, which had been on the French front line since the beginning of the war. This industrial area on the Moselle River served as the starting point for the American offensive to take St. Mihiel. Whether for a historic record or merely for practice, the 4th took aerial and ground photographs of the wrecked buildings and bomb craters in and near these cities.

At Thiaucourt, seized during the St. Mihiel offensive, photos were taken of the extensive destruction. A permanent American military cemetery was established in Thiaucourt after the war.

THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE

The final offensive of the war was staged by the Allied forces not far from Verdun, the

scene of one of the most protracted battles on the Western Front. The city and its outlying villages were heavily damaged by fighting, lasting from February to December 1916. In that famous confrontation, the French managed to stave off the German offensive, but the villages of Vaux and Fleury were almost completely destroyed and losses on both sides totaled nearly 750,000 casualties. The 4th took photographs of the ruins.

The Meuse-Argonne offensive, named for the sector between the Meuse River and Argonne Forest where the final Allied attack took place, began September 26, 1918, and involved more than a million troops of the AEF. The momentum begun at St. Mihiel succeeded again in breaking the German line, routing their forces and compelling the enemy to retreat entirely from the long-held Briey iron fields of northeastern France. The Armistice ending the war quickly followed and was signed on November 11th.

THE ARMISTICE

Under Armistice terms, German forces left France and the newly formed U.S. Third Army, along with Belgian, French and British forces, occupied the German Rhineland and its major cities. The area of occupation for the Third Army, which included IV Corps and its various units, extended from Trier, near Germany’s western border, to Coblenz, a

manufacturing city at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle rivers.

By Thanksgiving the 4th was in the village of Mercy-la-Haut, lined up for Thanksgiving dinner outside a stone barn. Twelve miles away, in the center of the iron mining region was the ancient city of Metz, under German rule since its surrender following a siege in 1871. Ballantine collected photographs of French troops entering the city for the first time in nearly 50 years. Crowds lined the streets, French flags hung from the windows of every building, and a massive statue of German Emperor William I lay toppled from its pedestal. Ballantine labeled the scenes “Big Times in Metz.”

TRIER, GERMANY

Ballantine had his photo taken in Trier on December 20th, as he stood between the two mud-splattered lorries of the 4th. They camped beside a massive German Zeppelin hangar – 574 feet long, 131 feet wide and 115 feet high. From its roof Trier

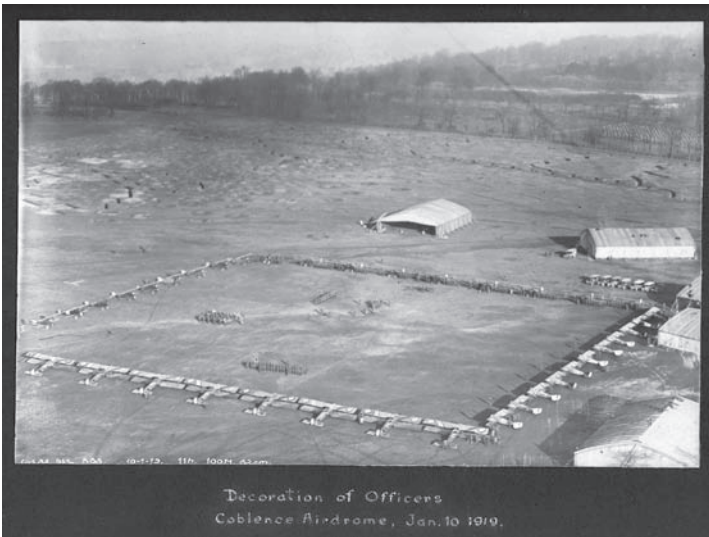
could be seen in the distance and, in a nearby field below, portable canvas hangars assembled for aircraft. American Liberty planes were parked in rows in front of the hangar. A flash photograph taken inside a nearby warehouse revealed a hundred or more bowling-ball-shaped bombs. “A few monster bombs,” Ballantine captioned one photo, “The smallest weighs 100 lbs. and the largest is five feet high.” The Roman ruins in Trier provided Ballantine and his fellow soldiers numerous opportunities to use their cameras. They produced large photographs of the ruins and, of course, the cathedral.

COBLENZ, GERMANY

The IV Corps Observation Group moved again in January 1919, this time to Coblenz. The group settled into quarters in the 19th-century walled “Fort Kaiser Alexander” at the Coblenz airdrome. Once again Ballantine took pictures of “scenes around the camp” and collected aerial shots of cities, factories, railroad bridges, rivers and the castles lining the Rhine. Had the war not been over, these photographs would have been of service to the army’s tacticians.

Copies of German photographs must have been plentiful, for Ballantine pasted more than a dozen in his albums. Kaiser Wilhelm

See *PRIVATE BALLANTINE*, page 8



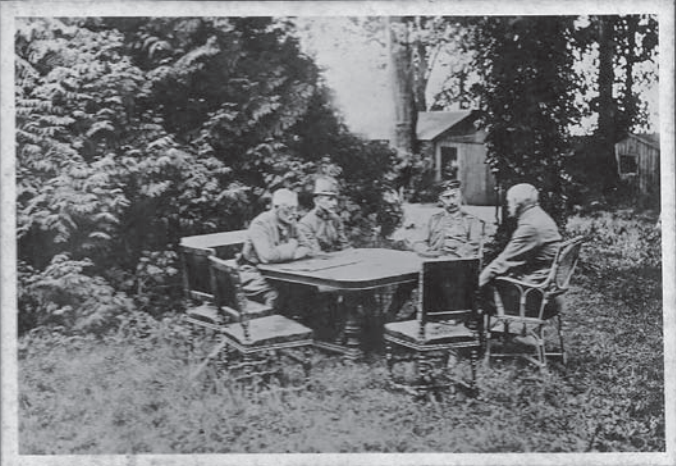
Decoration of Officers
Coblence Airframe, Jan. 10 1919.



The crown prince inspecting troops.

PRIVATE BALLANTINE, from page 7
 He was the subject of several. In a spike-topped helmet, he is shown reviewing his troops. A group photo of the planners of the German war effort include the Kaiser, his brother Crown Prince Heinrich, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, and Admiral von Tirpitz, the infamous instigator of unrestricted submarine warfare. They sit around an ornately carved table set down in high grass, obviously carried outside to accommodate the leaders on a pleasant summer day – but there are no refreshments on the table, only maps.

ality of this special duty was Major H. B. Anderson, commander of its IV Corps Observation Group, who crashed on February 21, 1919, while flying a German Fokker aircraft. A failing engine forced Anderson to return to camp and while trying to land he hit trees bordering the field. He survived the crash but was trapped in the plane as it caught fire. Ballantine's photographs include one of Anderson "trying out a German plane" and a half dozen others showing the remains of the burned-out



Von Tirpitz, prince Henry, the Kaiser and Hindenburg.

AFTER THE ARMISTICE

On February 1, 1919, Ballantine was promoted to Private First Class. A large photograph in his third album was quite possibly one of many Ballantine acquired following the Armistice. It is identified as the German armored plane that shot down Quentin Roosevelt. The son of former president Theodore Roosevelt had been a member of the AEF's Aero Squadron No. 1 and was eager to fly combat missions. It was said that no one wanted to assign the son of President Roosevelt to such duty. He was kept in administrative positions for nearly six months before managing to convince enough superiors of his determination to fly in combat. In early July 1918, he was finally assigned to the 95th Squadron and soon after was shot down – on France's Bastille Day, July 14th. The Germans made use of his death for propaganda purposes with photographs of Roosevelt's plane after his mangled body had been removed from the wreckage and laid beside it.

One of the missions of the Third Army of Occupation was to evaluate German aircraft before they were destroyed. A postwar casu-

Fokker and Anderson's funeral procession. As war-related duties wound down, other

GERMAN PHOTOS.



Tent city at Le Mans.



Pershing at Le Mans.



Barracks at Le Mans, with a show-down inspection.



A tramp.



Our ship the Louisville.



The Mayor's welcome boat.

HOMeward BOUND.

activities took their place, including dances sponsored by the YMCA, tours on the Rhine River and competitions staged between units of the AEF. An aerial photograph of a horse show was taken so high above the event that little was perceptible on the ground except the surrounding buildings. However, the photograph was important to Ballantine's unit because it was taken in a contest. "Pictures were exposed, developed and printed and delivered back on the field in twenty-nine minutes," he noted.

'HOMEWARD BOUND'

Six snapshots in the last of Ballantine's three albums are captioned "Homeward Bound." Several were taken at the embarkation camp set up at LeMans. "Tent city," Ballantine labeled it, although barracks were built as well. General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, was photographed striding past an exercise area with his staff.

The final photograph was an official one, although the setting was a fantasy. Pictures of the 4th Photo Section's members were taken individually and superimposed on a greatly enlarged image of the unit's aerial camera. So we see tiny soldiers positioned as if they were sitting, leaning against or standing on a giant camera. Other members of the section stood in the foreground, and in the background were hangars and Liberty planes. Perhaps because all the proportions had been doctored, Private First Class Ballantine – although still made to stand at the rear – for the first time looked shorter than his fellow soldiers.

Ballantine was discharged from the military on June 7, 1919. In his eight months' deployment overseas he had assembled more than 400 photos. He bought three albums in

New York City for \$1.75 each, pasted in the photographs, and carefully captioned them. They offer not only a first-hand view of what was called at the time "The Great War," they also convey the sense that, for Ballantine, at the edge of the action yet out of harm's way, it was a great adventure.

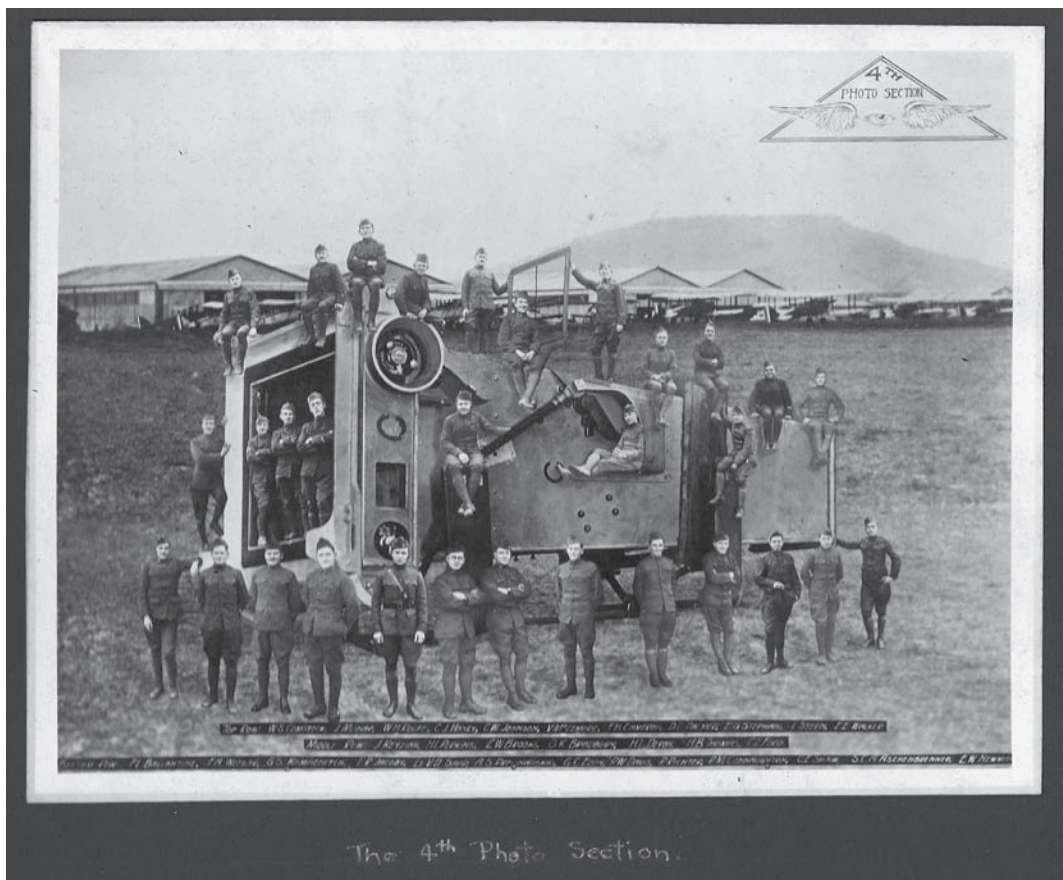
Whenever I visited Les Ballantine and his wife Jo in Miami Springs, Florida, in the late 1950s I always found him sitting in front of the television set in the tiny living room of their house, a cigarette in his hand and a glass of gin nearby – no matter what time of day it might be. Although I seldom saw him standing, his height was still evident because his knees rose far higher than the coffee table in front of him. His manner was always gruff and he was constantly calling his

wife to wait on him. I was a bit afraid of him, but because my father enjoyed talking with Les, I came along and listened. My father used to say, "Les squandered a family fortune," but I can't recall Les ever speaking about his past life or about the time he spent in World War I. Only the current news seemed to interest him. Yet one day he brought out his three albums of photographs and asked me if I wanted them. I was sixteen years old at the time. My father later said it was because he had no one else to give them to.

"You will probably throw them away," Les Ballantine said, but I didn't.

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The author thanks fellow Caxtonian Russell Maylone for directing me to Prof. Peter Hayes of the History Department of Northwestern University, an expert on early 20th-century European history, who kindly vetted this article.



KAY KRAMER, from page 11
contest.

I myself first met Kramer long before either of us were Caxtonians. It must have been in the late 1970s or early 1980s that I was organizing a Society of Typographic Arts program about the benefits and evils of phototypesetting, which was starting to push hot metal typesetting processes aside. I needed a pro and a con speaker, and at Bruce Beck's suggestion I

got Kramer to be the con to Mike Parker's pro.

I asked Kramer if he remembered the event. "I don't remember it clearly now, of course, but one thing I do recall was that either of us could have argued either side. Every 'advance' produces some collateral damage. I was able to concentrate on the way the new processes permitted ignorant people to break sensible rules of design that had taken hundreds of years to develop. But of course I was embracing

the new technology in my job, because there was really no choice. And by 1993, I was using computer typesetting in books at The Printery. It allows me to make cleaner, better produced, better edited, text than I could with handset type. But I still print it letterpress, and I augment the photopolymer with handset headlines and ornaments that I couldn't duplicate with electronics."

§§

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Robert McCamant

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "Windows on the War: Soviet TASS Posters at Home and Abroad, 1941–1945" (huge exhibit of very large posters created during the war and widely distributed at the time, but unseen since), Regenstein Hall, through October 23. "Making History: Women of the Art Institute" (archival items linked to eight women who made significant contributions to the Art Institute) Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, weekdays only through September 5. "Design Inspiration: 19th-Century American Builders' Manuals and Pattern Books" (popular pattern books throughout the 19th century as well as pre-World War I catalogs offering ready-to-construct home kits), Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, weekdays only opening September 6.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Genus Rosa" (historic rose illustrations from the collection), through November 13.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: "Lincoln's Chicago" (portraits of Lincoln's contemporaries paired with lithograph views of Chicago created in the 1860s), Sanger P. Robinson Gallery, ongoing.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "Actors, Plays & Stages: Early Theater in Chicago" (memorabilia of the first performance at the Sauganash Hotel, vibrant 19th century theaters and the rise of the Loop's grand auditoriums), Chicago Gallery, Third Floor, into 2012.

DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, 773-947-0600: "Black Wings: American Dreams of Flight" (significant figures, events, and themes associated with African Americans in aviation and aerospace history), through September 25.

Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Historical Society, 361 E. Westminster Avenue, Lake Forest, 847-234-5253: "Uncanny, Unabridged, Unforgettable: 150 Years of Lake Forest" (honors Lake Forest's Sesquicentennial), through December 29.

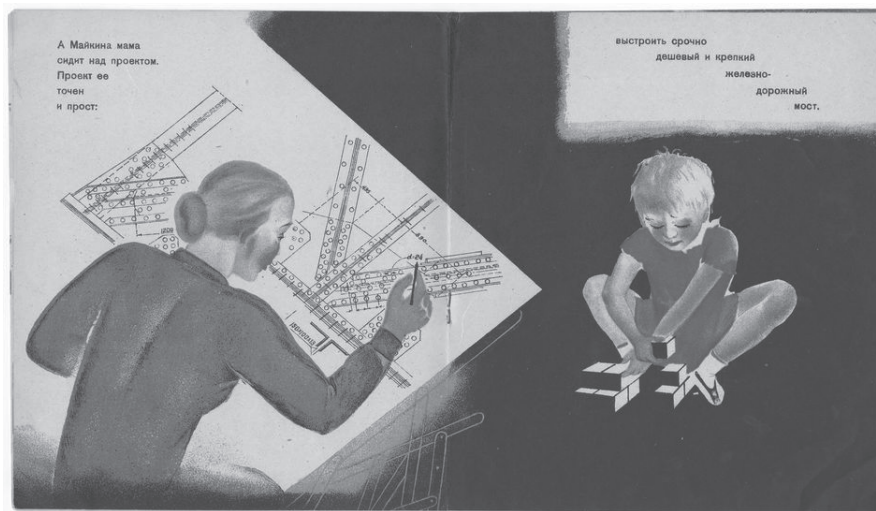
Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: "Pandora's Box: Joseph Cornell Unlocks the MCA Collection" (Cornell's work in dialogue with objects from the MCA's collection), through October 16.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "Balletics and Politics: Military Architecture Books at the Newberry"

(architectural books from the 16th to the 18th centuries displaying the military and political power of European rulers), through October 29. Northwestern University, Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston, 847-491-4000: "Views and Re-Views: Soviet Political Posters and Cartoons" (a post-Cold War assessment of Soviet graphic arts with 160 posters, cartoons, postcards and photomontages from a private collection), opens September 20.

Northwestern University, Charles Deering Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: "René Binet and Ernst Haeckel's Collaboration: Magical Naturalism and Architectural Ornament" (Binet had received the prestigious commission to design the principal gateway to

the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 – which he did from coral structures as they had been elucidated by the German biologist Ernest Haeckel. Binet's work parallels the Art Nouveau style but is unique in its geometric developments taking off from Haeckel's studies of biological morphology), Special Collec-



University of Chicago Library: *Adventures in the Soviet Imaginary*
N. SAKONSKAIA, MAMIN MOST (MOM'S BRIDGE). ILL. T. ZVONAREVA. MOSCOW: MOLODAIA GWARDIIA, 1933

tions through October 28.

Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9514: "Before the Pyramids: the Origins of Egyptian Civilization" (exhibition shows that the most fundamental aspects of ancient Egyptian civilization – architecture, hieroglyphic writing, a belief in the afterlife, and allegiance to a semi-divine king – can be traced to Egypt's Predynastic and Early Dynastic eras), through December 31.

Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-0200: "Process and Artistry in the Soviet Vanguard" (exposes the experimental creative processes that generated iconic Soviet propaganda in the 1920s and 1930s), through December 11.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: "Adventures in the Soviet Imaginary" (the Soviet Union as a world in pictures, facilitated by a vibrant image culture based largely on new media technologies, is explored through two of its most striking manifestations – the children's book and the poster – looked at in the wake of the Russian revolutions of 1917 and followed by periodic re-makings – during Stalin's Great Leap Forward, 1928–1932; World War II, 1941–1945; the Thaw, 1956–1964; and Perestroika, 1987–1991), Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, through December 31.

For complete information on events and exhibits of the Festival of the Architecture Book, see www.1511-2011.org.

For complete information on events and exhibits of the The Soviet Arts Experience, see www.sovietartsexperience.org.

Until a replacement exhibit editor is found, please send your listings to bmccamant@quarterfold.com, or call 312-329-1414 x 11.

Caxtonians Collect: Kay Michael Kramer

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Kay Michael Kramer may live far from Chicago (in Kirkwood, Missouri, near St. Louis), but he is an active member of our club in many ways. He turns up at meetings several times a year. He was a major contributor of items in the Leaf Book exhibit. He

wrote an essay on his copy of a William Edwin Rudge book for our recent book on association copies. But his most ubiquitous contribution to Club life, reaching into every member's mailbox twice a year, was as editor of the FABS newsletter, a task he carried out for 11 years, giving it up only this year.

Kramer has been interested in printing his whole adult life. It actually began when he was 14 years old, and passed by the window of the high school print shop and discovered pieces of type on the ground outside, where typesetting students had grown tired of distributing type and had instead thrown it out the window. As he told Timothy Hawley, "He returned home with his prizes and, examining them in his room, discovered the nature of type." His interest was in "...the act of combining letters to form words."

Upon graduation from high school, he applied to and was accepted by the School of Printing at the Rochester Institute of Technology. There, he was captivated by the teaching of Alexander Lawson, who went on to be the author of *Anatomy of a Typeface*, a 1990 Godine title that is in the reference collection of countless designers. Not long after graduation, he went to work for C. V. Mosby (now a division of Elsevier), a publishing company where he spent his entire working life. By his retirement after 37 years, he was Director of Art and Design.

From the outset, he collected books that interested him as he came across them. It has led to what he calls a modest (and his wife Virginia calls a sizeable) collection of books on Americana; trans-Mississippi settlement; what he calls "Printing and the Mind of Man," naming his category after an exhibit on the impact of printed books on the development

"The Printery." He was inspired by an abandoned building in a small Illinois town which had that inscription on its window.

Hawley describes his first book:

"The Printery properly begins with the publication of *Old Drum* in 1970, its first book. As is typical of a number of his productions, *Old Drum* has a focal point (in this case, George

Graham Vest's now famous 'Eulogy to the Dog') with an introduction and an afterword. The text of the eulogy is printed in a larger size of type and on a slightly different shade of paper as a way of highlighting the focal point of the book."

A recent highlight was his 2006 publication, *On Collecting William Morris: A Memoir*, by Jack Walsdorf. It was a runner-up for the 2007 William Hertzog Award, and was reviewed in Issue 15 of *Parenthesis*,

the magazine of the Fine Press Book Association. Its companion volume, *The Artist & the Capitalist: William Morris and Richard Marsden*, by Florence Boos, was published in 2010 and will be reviewed in Issue 21 of *Parenthesis*, due out in fall 2011.

Altogether, Kramer has completed thirteen casebound books so far. An exhibit at the St. Louis Mercantile Library in 2001, held in conjunction with the American Printing History Association's annual conference, showed highlights of the work to that date. These days, the complete range of work is described and depicted at <http://theprinterybooks.com/>.

A book project led him to meet late Caxtonian Frank Piehl; Piehl suggested to Kramer that he join the Caxton Club, and in 1998 Piehl became Kramer's nominator. Kramer was also active with the Chicago Book Clinic, both as a judge for and chair of their annual

See KAY KRAMER, page 9



Kay Kramer, lower right, at the Association Copy gala.

of western civilization; typography; printing history generally; and last but not often the most fun: forgery.

But designing books at work, plus collecting them at home, led him almost immediately to a lifelong avocation: making books and ephemera by hand at home. When he bought a house in Kirkwood (in 1966), he made certain that it had a basement suitable for setting up a print shop. Not long later, he came across a Vandercook proof press (to this day the gold standard among American presses for fine short-run printing) that had barely been used but was nonetheless selling for a very good price.

He started by printing ephemera (for example, he has done Christmas greetings every year since 1958!), but James Lamar Weygand (proprietor of the Press of the Indiana Kid) urged him to move on to books. He soon had his name for the press, as well:



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60 West Walton Street
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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, Sept. 9, 2011, Union League Club

Tom Joyce

Up to Date Information on Appraising
Books, Manuscripts and Maps

Who better to tackle this subject than Caxtonian Tom Joyce, who, as a long-time antiquarian bookseller in Chicagoland, has spent 35 years in the appraisal trenches. Tom's talk includes details about the four kinds of appraisal requests he gets (probate, insurance, donations and sales) including why some are declined by him; the six places he finds information on which to base his appraisals (the seventh being his brain); how he deals with the fact that certain items have different values in other locales; how to tell an institution that their John Milton is worth \$200,000 less than anticipated; and how to find an appropriate place to donate or sell items, thus dispersing as opposed to disposing. Anecdotes abound. Tom is a past president of the Club, a current member of the Council, *the* inspiration behind the creation of the DVD program, a director of our annual auction and a regular contributor to the *Caxtonian*.

A lively question and answer period is anticipated.

Dinner: Wednesday, September 21, 2011, Cliff Dwellers

Vincent Buonanno

On His Collection of
Illustrated Books on Architecture

September 21 will be Vincent Buonanno talking about his extensive collection of illustrated books on architecture. Watch for the September postcard for additional information.

Beyond September...

OCTOBER LUNCHEON

Caxtonian Steve Woodall, Director of The Center for Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College, will talk on Friday, October 14, at the Union League Club.

OCTOBER DINNER

October 19th, at Cliff Dwellers, Ed Hirschland will talk about his extraordinary Chicagoana collection.

NOVEMBER LUNCHEON

On November 11, Caxtonians Sarah Pritchard, Dean of Libraries and Jeffrey Garrett, Director of Special Collections (both of Northwestern University), will speak about how librarians work with donors to solicit collections, and what are the trials, tribulations and serendipities along the way.

NOVEMBER DINNER

Note: **Second** Wednesday!

November 9, Wesley Brown will talk on "The Discovery of the New World through Old Maps."