Collection Summary

Title: John J. Ballentine Papers
Span Dates: 1913-1973
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1942-1954)
ID No.: MSS78663
Creator: Ballentine, John J. (John Jennings), 1896-1970
Extent: 5,000 items
Extent: 21 containers plus 11 oversize
Extent: 10 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LC Catalog record: https://lccn.loc.gov/mm89078663
Summary: United States Navy officer and air pilot. Correspondence, memoranda, diaries, logbooks, military records, biographical material, scrapbooks, clippings, photographs, and other papers relating primarily to Ballentine's naval career after 1920.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People
Barth, Theodore H. (Theodore Harold), 1891-1967--Correspondence.

Organizations
Bunker Hill (Aircraft carrier : CV-17)
Carl L. Norden, Inc.
Naval Proving Ground (Dahlgren, Va.)
United States. Navy--Foreign service--Mediterranean Region.

Subjects
Aeronautics, Military.
Airplanes, Military--Flight testing.
Flight training.
Flight.
Hunting.
Norden bombsight.
Operation Torch, 1942.
Remote control.
World War, 1939-1945--Aerial operations, American.
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Africa, North.
World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Pacific Ocean.
World War, 1939-1945--Naval operations, American.

Places
United States--Armed forces.
Occupations
Aviators.
Naval officers.

Provenance
The papers of John J. Ballentine, naval officer and aviator, were deposited in the Library of Congress by the Naval Historical Foundation in 1989 and converted to gift in 1998.

Transfers
Most photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

Copyright Status
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John J. Ballentine is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions
The papers of John J. Ballentine are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John J. Ballentine Papers, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1896, Oct. 4</td>
<td>Born, Hillsboro, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Graduated from United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-1918</td>
<td>Served on Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-1919</td>
<td>Duty at Naval Auxiliary Reserve Officers' School, Pelham Bay Park, N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-1920</td>
<td>Served on Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Flight training at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designated naval aviator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-1921</td>
<td>Trained in land planes with United States Army Air Corps, Carlstrom Field, Arcadia, Fla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Trained in pursuit planes at Kelly Field, San Antonio, Tex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1922</td>
<td>Duty in first torpedo plane squadron, Atlantic Fleet, Torpedo Plane Division, Yorktown, Va., renamed Torpedo Plane Squadron One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Married Catherine H. Shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-1926</td>
<td>Officer in charge, Naval Air Detail, Dahlgren, Va.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted original tests on Norden bombsight models and operated first pilotless radio-controlled airplane, Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Va.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-1927</td>
<td>Commanding officer, Torpedo Squadron Twenty, attached to Jason, Asiatic Fleet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1927-1928
Commanding officer, Observation Squadron Eleven, Light Cruiser Division Three, assigned to Marblehead, Asiatic Fleet
Made official inspection of Japanese naval aviation and aircraft manufacturing facilities

1928-1931
Officer in charge, Naval Air Detail, Dahlgren, Va.
Tested advanced models of Norden bombsight

1931-1933
Commanding officer, Torpedo Squadron Two, based on the Saratoga

1933-1935
Head, War Plans Section, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

1935-1936
Executive officer, Plans Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

1936-1937
Navigator and later operations officer, Wright, flagship of Commander Aircraft Base Force

1938-1939
Gunnery officer and later operations officer on staff of Commander Aircraft Battle Force, Saratoga

1939-1941
Served in Personnel Division and became head of Flight Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

1941
Executive officer, Ranger

1941-1942
Commanding officer, Long Island

1942
Chief of staff and aide to the commander, Carriers, Atlantic Fleet, Ranger
Chief of staff to the commander, Air Group, Western Naval Task Force during action off Casablanca in November

1943-1944
First commanding officer, Bunker Hill

1944
Deputy, chief of staff, and aide to the commander, Aircraft, Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

1944-1945
Commander, Fleet Air, Seattle, Wash.

1945
Commander, Carrier Division Seven, Third Fleet, Bon Homme Richard
Fleet liaison officer for Commander in Chief Pacific at Headquarters, Supreme Commander for Allied Powers, Pacific; landed at Atsugi Airport, 30 Aug., in airborne occupation of Japan; and escorted Gen. Douglas MacArthur to the surrender ceremonies on the Missouri, 2 Sept.

1946-1947
Chief of staff and aide to the representative of the chief of naval operations, United Nations Military Staff Committee of the Security Council

1947-1949
Commander, Carrier Division One in the Mediterranean

1949
Member of the General Board, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

1949-1951
Commander, Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean

1951-1954
Commander, Air Force, Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Va.

1954, May 1
Retired from navy and promoted to admiral

1956-1957
Recalled to active duty as navy member of blue-ribbon interservice board studying the air defense of the North American continent

1970, May 21
Died, Bethesda, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Jennings Ballentine (1896-1970), naval officer and aviator, span the years 1913-1973, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1942 to 1954. The papers focus primarily on Ballentine's activities during his career in the navy. His class graduated from the United States Naval Academy in three years in 1917 in order to participate in World War I, but the main documentation of his career begins in 1920, when Ballentine began flight training in the fifth class trained at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. His activities as a pioneer aviator included testing the first models of the Norden bombsight in the 1920s and 1930s and controlling from the ground the first airplane operated under remote control. A major focus of the collection is Ballentine's activities during World War II. He saw action off the coast of Casablanca in November 1942. He also served as the first commanding officer of the aircraft carrier Bunker Hill from its commissioning in May 1943 to 5 February 1944. While under his command, the Bunker Hill saw action at Rabaul and Kavieng (now part of Papua New Guinea) and in the Gilbert, Nauro, and Marshall islands. These episodes are documented in each series of the collection. Other portions of the collection document Ballentine's two tours of duty in the Mediterranean, as commander of Carrier Division One in 1947-1949 and as commander of the Sixth Fleet from 1949-1951, and his final duty in Norfolk, Virginia, as commander of the Air Force, Atlantic Fleet (COMAIRLANT), from 1951 to 1954.
The Diaries series (1941-1962) is incomplete. There are no diaries for March 1944 through 1946 or for 1954. The first four diaries document Ballentine's daily activities during much of World War II. The volume covering 20 October 1942 to 15 September 1943 provides detail about Operation Torch and the action off Casablanca as well as about his assignment overseeing the final fitting and commissioning of the Bunker Hill. The 16 September 1943 to 27 February 1944 volume features action the aircraft carrier saw in the Pacific during his command. The diaries covering his tours in the Mediterranean and as COMAIRLANT in Norfolk contain personal insights and details which supplement the official records found in the General Correspondence series and Subject File. The diaries for 1955-1962 document Ballentine's retirement, as well as his activities when recalled to serve on an interservice board in Washington, D.C., from November 1956 to July 1957. They demonstrate that Ballentine took an active role in maintaining his farm “Millbank” in Doga, Virginia, and that he continued to pursue his lifelong interest in hunting. There are no entries concerning the last eight years of his life.

The General Correspondence (1920-1970) contains letters, cables, and memoranda relating to Ballentine's naval career, primarily from 1920 to 1954. In addition to official correspondence, there are copies of letters sent and received from friends and associates. Documents from the 1930s trace his various duties at the Naval Air Station in Dahlgren, Virginia. Correspondence from the mid-1930s through the 1940s from Theodore H. Barth, president of Carl L. Norden, Inc., includes information on the testing and production of bombsights. Related material can be found in the Subject File under “Naval aviation.” The general correspondence from 1948 through March 1951 is minimal because most of it has been integrated in the Subject File under the heading “Mediterranean ports.” The most extensive portion of the general correspondence consists of personal office files created when Ballentine was COMAIRLANT between 1951 and 1954. Included are letters from other fleet commanders reporting on the Mediterranean. The Korean War is a recurring theme although not a central feature of these files. Two oversize scrapbooks, containing photographs, clippings, cards, and letters relating to Ballentine's activities as COMAIRLANT, and his call record (telephone log) in the Miscellany series complement the correspondence files.

The Subject File (1913-1973, undated) primarily concerns Ballentine's naval career, naval aviation, and the activities of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Biographical information on Ballentine is contained in official military records, such as commissions and appointments, orders to duty, and awards and commendations, as well as official biographies and news clippings. Within the group of naval aviation files are records of Ballentine's own aviation activities in the 1920s and 1930s as well as historic overviews written as early as the 1930s and in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of naval aviation in 1961. The activities of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean from 1948 through 1951 are well documented in the segment relating to Mediterranean ports. These files contain memoranda, cables, correspondence, schedules, invitations, guest lists, and calling cards documenting the military training and diplomatic role of the Sixth Fleet. The subject files on Ballentine's Sixth Fleet activities are supplemented by the logbooks and photographs in the Miscellany series and in several oversize scrapbooks.

Most of the photographs from this collection have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. These include shots of airplanes, aircraft carriers, battleships, destroyers, and tankers; scenes of World War II action in the Pacific; activities aboard the Bunker Hill (including views of damage caused by two Japanese kamikazes in May 1945); and activities in the Mediterranean. Some personal photographs, duplicates, and photographs from albums presented to Ballentine to commemorate official naval functions have been retained in the Miscellany series.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- Diaries, 1941-1962
- General Correspondence, 1920-1970
- Subject File, 1913-1973
- Miscellany, 1914-1961
- Oversize, 1942-1970
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-7</td>
<td><strong>Diaries, 1941-1962</strong></td>
<td>Daily accounts of activities while on active duty in the navy and in retirement. Arranged chronologically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 7-12</td>
<td><strong>General Correspondence, 1920-1970</strong></td>
<td>Personal and official correspondence relating almost exclusively to Ballentine's activities as naval officer. Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
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<td>BOX 12-19</td>
<td><strong>Subject File, 1913-1973</strong></td>
<td>Memoranda, correspondence, military records, biographical information, invitations, calling cards, and miscellaneous printed matter focusing on Mediterranean ports of call, naval aviation, naval vessels, and Ballentine's naval career. Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically therein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 19-21</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1914-1961</strong></td>
<td>Logbooks, identification cards, photographs, scrapbooks, and annotated Naval Academy handbooks. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1-OV 11</td>
<td><strong>Oversize, 1942-1970</strong></td>
<td>Scrapbooks (includes photographs), maps, rosters, an autographed sign, and automobile flag. Arranged and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were removed.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Container List

<table>
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| BOX 1-7   | **Diaries, 1941-1962**  
Daily accounts of activities while on active duty in the navy and in retirement.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1     | 1 July 1941-27 Feb. 1944  
(4 folders)  
1947 |
| BOX 2     | 1948-1950  
(3 vols.) |
| BOX 3     | 1951-1952  
(3 vols.) |
| BOX 4     | 1953  
(2 vols.)  
1955 |
| BOX 5     | 1956-1958  
(3 vols.) |
| BOX 6     | 1959-1961  
(3 vols.) |
| BOX 7     | 1962 |
| BOX 7-12  | **General Correspondence, 1920-1970**  
Personal and official correspondence relating almost exclusively to Ballentine's activities as naval officer.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 7     | Nov. 1920-Dec. 1938  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 8     | Jan. 1939-Sept. 1947  
(8 folders)  
Nov. 1949-May 1951  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 9     | June 1951-May 1952  
(13 folders) |
| BOX 10    | June 1952-Apr. 1953  
(12 folders) |
| BOX 11    | May 1953-Mar. 1954  
(15 folders) |
| BOX 12    | Apr.-May 1954  
(3 folders) |
1957, 1970

**BOX 12-19  Subject File, 1913-1973**
Memoranda, correspondence, military records, biographical information, invitations, calling cards, and miscellaneous printed matter focusing on Mediterranean ports of call, naval aviation, naval vessels, and Ballentine's naval career.
Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically therein.

**BOX 12**
Aviation, 1953
*For additional material see same series, Naval aviation*

Biographical information
  - Appointments and commissions, 1913-1954
  - Awards and commendations, 1921-1952
    (2 folders)
  - Biographical sketches, 1948-1957
  - Clippings, 1926-1970
  - Family information, 1922-1972, undated
  - Fitness reports, 1947-1949
  - Orders to duty
    - Permanent change of duty orders, 1917-1954
      (2 folders)
    - Temporary additional duty (TAD) orders, 1920-1954
      (4 folders)

**BOX 13**
Personal miscellany, 1919-1951, undated
  - Retirement, change of command ceremonies, 1954
  - Commander Air Force, United States Atlantic Fleet (COMAIRLANT)
    - Guest lists and schedules, 1951-1953
    - Roster of officers, 1951-1953
  - See also Oversize, Subject File
  - Defense issues, clippings, 1951-1957
  - Joint Civilian Orientation Conference, 1951-1953
    (2 folders)
  - Mediterranean ports
    - Algiers, Algeria, 1950, undated
    - Athens, Greece, 1948-1951, undated
      (3 folders)
    - Augusta, Italy, 1950-1951, undated
    - Barcelona, Spain, 1950-1951, undated
      (2 folders)

**BOX 14**
Beirut, Lebanon, 1950-1951, undated
  (2 folders)
  - Bone (Annaba), Algeria, 1949
  - Casablanca, French Morocco, 1949-1951
  - Genoa, Italy, 1947-1950, undated
  - Gibraltar, 1947-1951
  - Golfe-Juan, France, 1948-1950, undated
  - Hyères, France, 1948-1949, undated

**BOX 15**
Istanbul, Turkey, 1950-1951, undated
  *See also Oversize, Subject File*
  (3 folders)
  - La Spezia, Italy, 1950
Subject File, 1913-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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</table>
| BOX 16    | Lisbon, Portugal, 1949-1951 (2 folders)  
|            | Malta, 1947-1951, undated (2 folders)  
|            | Messina, Italy, 1950  
|            | Naples, Italy, 1947-1951, undated (6 folders)  
|            | Oran, Algeria, 1950  
|            | Palermo, Italy, 1948-1950  
|            | Palma (Majorca), Spain, 1950-1951  
|            | Rhodes, Greece, and Suda Bay, Crete, 1950  
| BOX 17    | Sardinia (Italy), 1950  
|            | Sfax, Tunisia, 1948  
|            | Taranto, Italy, 1948-1951, undated  
|            | Toulon, France, 1948-1950  
|            | Trieste (Free Territory of Trieste), 1950  
|            | Tripoli, Libya, 1948-1950  
|            | Venice, Italy, 1950  
|            | Villefranche, France, 1948-1950, undated (3 folders)  
| BOX 18    | Miscellany, 1920-1957, undated See also Oversize, Subject File (maps)  
|            | Naval aviation  
|            | Bombing practice, 1930-1933  
|            | Bombsight testing, 1930-1932  
|            | General, 1922-1961, undated (6 folders)  
|            | Radio-controlled flight experiment, 1924  
|            | Sixth Fleet, 1948-1951 For additional material see same series, Mediterranean ports  
| BOX 19    | Speeches and speech material, 1953-1957  
|            | United Nations, Military Staff Committee of the Security Council, pheasant hunt, 1946  
|            | United States Fleet, Aircraft, Battle Force, 1932, 1939  
|            | United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., class of 1918, fiftieth reunion, 1967  
|            | Vessels  
|            | Antietam, 1953  
|            | Bairoko, 1945  
|            | Bunker Hill, 1942-1973, undated See also Oversize, Subject File; and Subject File (maps) (4 folders)  
|            | Coral Sea, [1953?]  
|            | Leyte fire, 1953  
|            | Long Island, 1941-1942, 1949  
|            | Marblehead, 1928  
|            | Ranger, 1941-1942 See also Oversize, Subject File (maps)  

John J. Ballentine Papers  9
Tarawa, 1952-1953

**BOX 19-21**  
**Miscellany, 1914-1961**  
Logbooks, identification cards, photographs, scrapbooks, and annotated Naval Academy handbooks.  
Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.

**BOX 19**  
Admiral's call record, Apr. 1951-1 Jan. 1953

**BOX 20**  
Identification and membership cards, 1941-1961, undated

Photographs  
*Bunker Hill*, 1943-1944  
Commander Air Force, United States Atlantic Fleet (COMAIRLANT), 1951-1954  
COMAIRLANT staff, 1952

Mediterranean ports  
Algiers, Algeria, 1950  
Athens, Greece, undated  
Beirut, Lebanon, 1950  
Crete (Greece), 1950  
French Riviera, 1950, undated  
Genoa, Italy, 1950  
Istanbul, Turkey, 1950, undated  
(4 folders)

Naples, Italy, 1949-1951  
Palermo, Italy, 1949-1951  
Taranto, Italy, 1950, undated  
Trieste (Free Territory of Trieste), 1950

Miscellaneous, 1947, undated

Portraits  
Ballentine, Catherine S., undated  
Ballentine, John Jennings, circa 1915-1954, undated  
(2 folders)

**BOX 21**  
United Nations, Military Staff Committee  
General, 1946-1947  
(2 folders)

Pheasant hunt, 1946

Scrapbooks *See Oversize, Miscellany*

Standing orders for staff watch officer  
28 Nov. 1949-15 Sep. 1950  
19 Sep. 1950-16 Mar. 1951

United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., “Reef Points” handbook  
1914-1917  
(3 folders)

1946-1947

**BOX OV 1-OV 11**  
**Oversize, 1942-1970**  
Scrapbooks (includes photographs), maps, rosters, an autographed sign, and automobile flag.  
Arranged and described according to the series, folders, and boxes from which the items were removed.
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<th>Container</th>
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</table>
| BOX OV 1  | Subject File  
Commander Air Force, United States Atlantic Fleet Roster of officers, 1951-1953  
*(Container 13)*  
Mediterranean ports  
Istanbul, Turkey, 1950  
*(Container 15)*  
Vessels  
*Bunker Hill, 1970*  
*(Container 19)* |
| BOX OV 2  | Subject File (maps)  
Miscellany, undated  
*(Container 18)*  
Vessels  
*Bunker Hill, circa 1944*  
*(Container 19)*  
*Ranger, 1942*  
*(Container 19)* |
| BOX OV 3  | Miscellany  
Scrapbooks (Container 21)  
Commander Fleet Air (COMFAIR), Seattle, Wash., 27 Oct. 1944-18 June 1945 |
| BOX OV 4-OV 8 | Commander Sixth Fleet (COMSIXTHFLT), 14 Nov. 1949-19 Mar. 1951  
(5 volumes) |
| BOX OV 9-OV 10 | Commander Air Force, Atlantic (COMAIRLANT), 11 Apr. 1951-1 May 1954  
(2 volumes) |
| BOX OV 11 | Joint Civilian Orientation Conference (seventeenth), 1953 |