

John J. Ballentine Papers

A Finding Aid to the Papers in the Naval Historical Foundation Collection in the Library of Congress



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1992**

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Prepared by Laura Kells

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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://lcn.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

Ballentine, John J. (John Jennings), 1896-1970.

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--Aviation.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--Atlantic Ocean.

United States. Navy--Foreign service--Mediterranean Region.

United States. Navy--Officers.

United States. Navy. Atlantic Fleet. Air Force.

United States. Navy. Carrier Division One.

United States. Navy. Fleet, 6th.

Subjects

Aeronautics, Military.

Airplanes, Military--Flight testing.

Flight training.

Flight.

Hunting.

Korean War, 1950-1953.

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

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

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. Appointed vice admiral
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 Dogue, 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

Container	Series
BOX 1-7	<p><u>Diaries, 1941-1962</u></p> <p>Daily accounts of activities while on active duty in the navy and in retirement. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 7-12	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1920-1970</u></p> <p>Personal and official correspondence relating almost exclusively to Ballentine's activities as naval officer. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 12-19	<p><u>Subject File, 1913-1973</u></p> <p>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.</p>
BOX 19-21	<p><u>Miscellany, 1914-1961</u></p> <p>Logbooks, identification cards, photographs, scrapbooks, and annotated Naval Academy handbooks. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and chronologically therein.</p>
BOX OV 1-OV 11	<p><u>Oversize, 1942-1970</u></p> <p>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.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
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)

General Correspondence, 1920-1970

Container

Contents

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

Container

Contents

	Lisbon, Portugal, 1949-1951 (2 folders)
	Malta, 1947-1951, undated (2 folders)
	Messina, Italy, 1950
BOX 16	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
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	Villefranche, France, 1948-1950, undated (3 folders)
BOX 18	Miscellany, 1920-1957, undated <i>See also Oversize, Subject File (maps)</i>
	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 <i>For additional material see same series, Mediterranean ports</i>
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
	<i>Antietam</i> , 1953
	<i>Bairoko</i> , 1945
	<i>Bunker Hill</i> , 1942-1973, undated <i>See also Oversize, Subject File; and Subject File (maps)</i> (4 folders)
	<i>Coral Sea</i> , [1953?]
	<i>Leyte</i> fire, 1953
	<i>Long Island</i> , 1941-1942, 1949
	<i>Marblehead</i> , 1928
	<i>Ranger</i> , 1941-1942 <i>See also Oversize, Subject File (maps)</i>

Subject File, 1913-1973

Container

Contents

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.

Oversize, 1942-1970

Container	Contents
BOX OV 1	Subject File Commander Air Force, United States Atlantic Fleet Roster of officers, 1951-1953 <i>(Container 13)</i> Mediterranean ports Istanbul, Turkey, 1950 <i>(Container 15)</i> Vessels <i>Bunker Hill</i> , 1970 <i>(Container 19)</i>
BOX OV 2	Subject File (maps) Miscellany, undated <i>(Container 18)</i> Vessels <i>Bunker Hill</i> , circa 1944 <i>(Container 19)</i> <i>Ranger</i> , 1942 <i>(Container 19)</i>
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