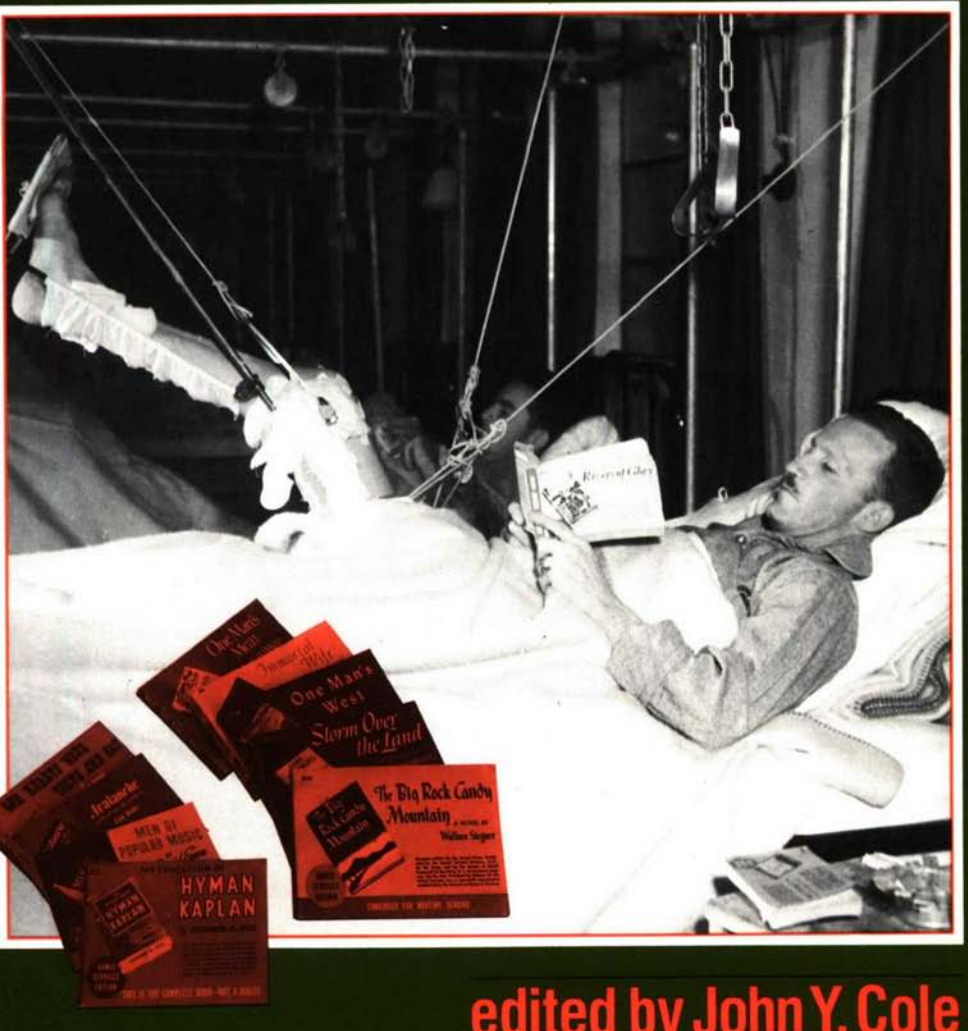
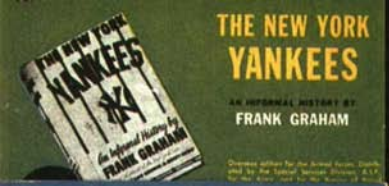
BOOKS IN ACTION

THE ARMED SERVICES EDITIONS

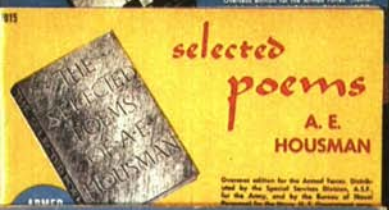


edited by John Y. Cole

BOOKS IN ACTION


THE NEW YORK YANKEES
AN INFORMAL HISTORY BY
FRANK GRAHAM

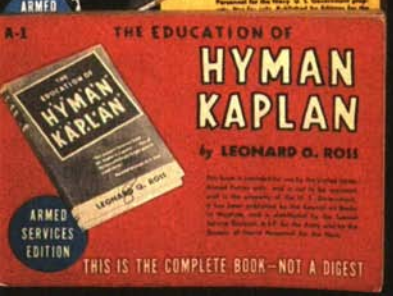

The ADVENTURES of SUPERMAN
BY
GEORGE LOWTHER

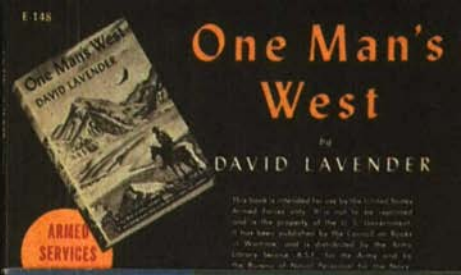

selected poems
A. E.
HOUSMAN


A MERRIAM-WEBSTER
WEBSTER'S
NEW HANDY
DICTIONARY

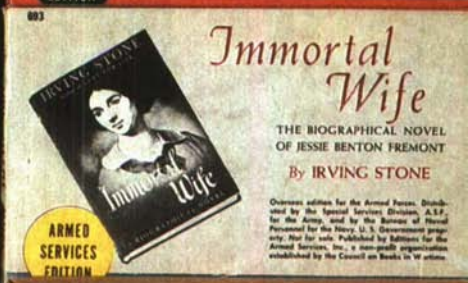

OUR HEARTS WERE YOUNG AND GAY
BY
CORNELIA OTIS SKINNER AND EMILY KIMBROUGH


MEN OF POPULAR MUSIC
BY
David Ewen

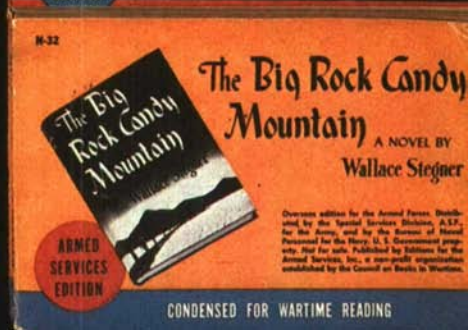

THE EDUCATION OF
HYMAN KAPLAN
by LEONARD Q. ROSS
ARMED SERVICES EDITION
THIS IS THE COMPLETE BOOK—NOT A DIGEST


E-148
One Man's West
by
DAVID LAVENDER
ARMED SERVICES


P-36
One Man's Meat
by E.B.White
ARMED SERVICES EDITION


803
Immortal Wife
THE BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL OF JESSIE BENTON FREMONT
By IRVING STONE
ARMED SERVICES EDITION


A-27
Storm Over the Land
Profile of the Civil War
by CARL SANDBURG
ARMED SERVICES EDITION


N-32
The Big Rock Candy Mountain
A NOVEL BY
Wallace Stegner
ARMED SERVICES EDITION
CONDENSED FOR WARTIME READING

BOOKS IN ACTION

THE ARMED SERVICES EDITIONS

Edited by JOHN Y. COLE
Executive Director, The Center for the Book

Library of Congress · Washington · 1984

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

Books in action.

Bibliography: p.
Supt. of Docs. no.: LC 1.2:B64/6
1. Armed Services Editions, Inc. 2. Soldiers—United States—Books and reading. 3. World War, 1939–1945—Literature and the war. 4. Publishers and publishing—United States—History—20th century. 5. Paperbacks—Collectors and collecting. 6. Bibliography—Best books—Catalogs. I. Cole, John Young, 1940– II. Center for the Book.
Z1039.S6B66 1984 070.5'73'088355 84–600198
ISBN 0–8444–0466–7 (alk. paper)

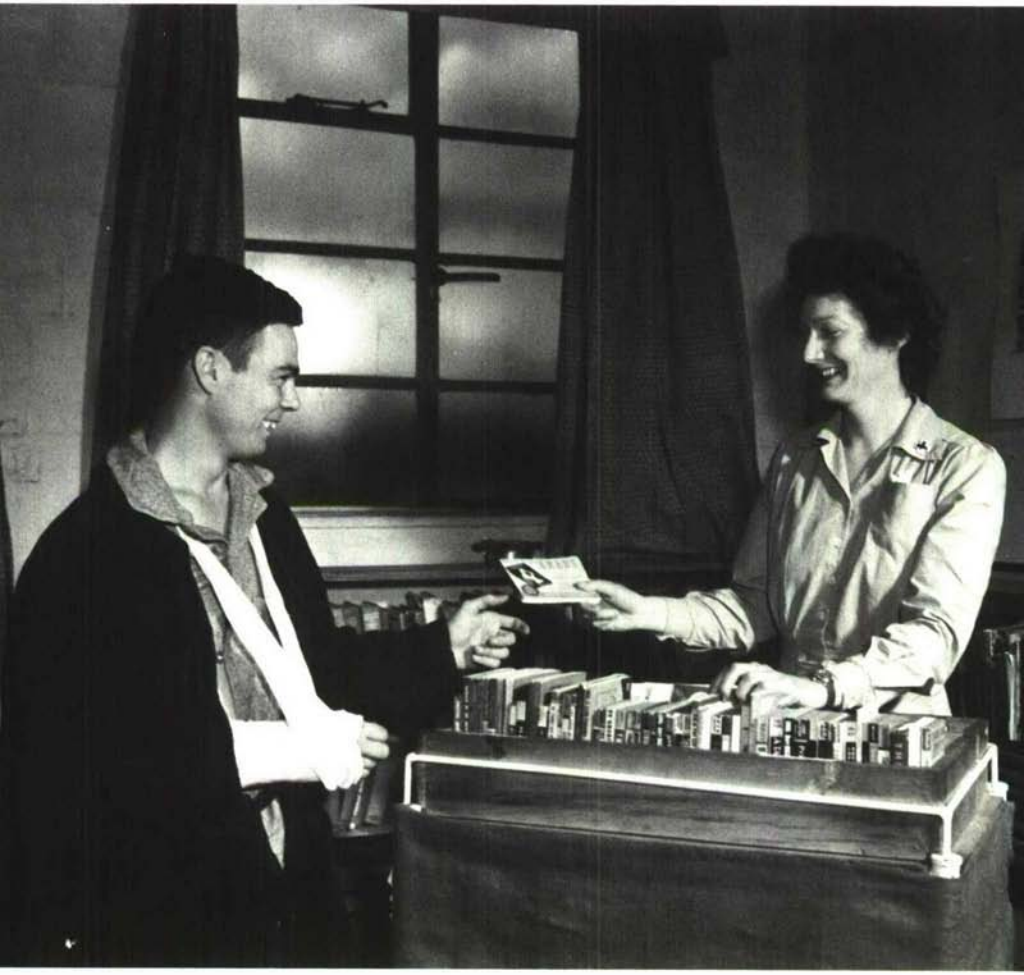
This booklet is printed on acid-free paper.

Designed by Adrianne Onderdonk Dudden

Photographs from the U.S. Army Pictorial Service used in this book illustrate servicemen and servicewomen reading ASE books available to them in libraries, bookmobiles, and hospitals where they were stationed in Heidelberg, Germany, Wasserburg, Germany, and elsewhere during the Second World War. Courtesy Irving Lieberman.

The photograph of the ASE books from the collections of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress is by James R. Higgins and Reid S. Baker of the Library's Photoduplication Service.

CONTENTS



PREFACE

The fortieth anniversary of the Armed Services Editions, those squat paperbacks distributed by the millions to U.S. servicemen and servicewomen during World War II, was celebrated at the Library of Congress on February 17, 1983. People with firsthand experience in administering the project were brought together with publishers, scholars, collectors, and readers of these remarkable volumes. The sponsor of the event, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, is pleased to make this book based on the day's events available to a wide audience.

The significance of the Armed Services Editions to the mass-market paperback movement was one theme discussed at the meeting. Moderator Daniel J. Boorstin, The Librarian of Congress, also invited participants to consider two other pertinent questions: How did such an imaginative but potentially difficult cooperative project between government and the private sector get started? And how did the books affect their readers? He cited the Armed Services Editions as an inspiring example of how imagination and determination can entice new audiences into the community of readers.

The Center for the Book is grateful to the participants who helped make the occasion a fitting tribute to an important endeavor. The principal speakers were George P. Brockway, Chairman, W.W. Norton Company, who commented on the origins of the project; Mildred Young Johnson, a former U.S. Army librarian and widow of publisher Malcolm Johnson, one of the project's founders; Dorothy Deininger, former U.S. Navy librarian who helped administer the project; Irving Lieberman, former U.S. Army library administrator and dean emeritus of the University of Washington School of Librarianship; Ian Ballantine, one of the pioneer paperback publishers; Arnold Gates, a historian who was "troop librarian" with the 27th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop; historian Michael Hackenberg of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago;

writer Max Wilk; and Nell Strickland, chief, Library Activities Division, U.S. Army, who briefly described the army's contemporary book programs.

Two stories about the effect of the books on their readers represent the many that were told on February 17. Irving Lieberman read from a letter he had just received from a University of Washington professor, who said the books "introduced me not only to new literary friends but opened up associations with some old ones. I remember in particular Hemingway, Sigrid Undset, Dickens, and Maugham. . . . I still have a half-dozen of these paperbacks. They represent the most positive of my memories of service days." Arnold Gates told how during the Battle of Saipan he carried a copy of Carl Sandburg's *Storm over the Land* in his helmet: "During the lulls in the battle I would read what he wrote about another war and found a great deal of comfort and reassurance." Years later, Sandburg inscribed the book for him.

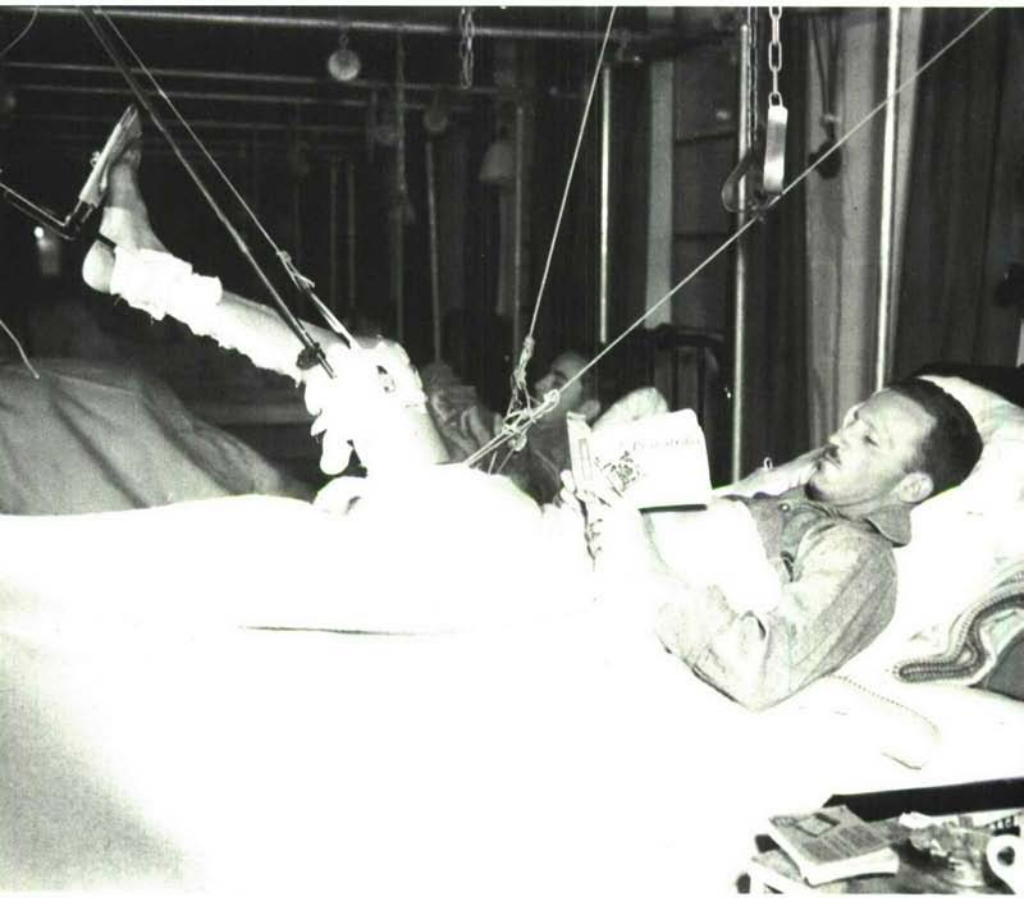
Special thanks go to Michael Hackenberg and Matthew J. Bruccoli for the essays they prepared for this volume. As their contributions make clear, each of these scholar-collectors is an avid fan of the Armed Services Editions; it was a pleasure to share their enthusiasm. James Gilreath of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division in the Library of Congress helped plan the occasion and prepared an exhibit from the Library of Congress's complete set of Armed Services Editions. We also appreciate the comments sent to the Center for the Book by the authors of books published in Armed Services Editions. They are included here with permission.

Proposed by Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin and established by Act of Congress in 1977, the Center for the Book exists to keep the book flourishing by focusing national attention on books, reading, and the printed word. It works closely with organizations outside the Library of Congress to promote reading, to explore contemporary issues affecting books and reading, and to stimulate the study of books. It pursues these goals primarily by bringing together members of the book, educational, and business communities for symposia and projects. It also sponsors publica-

tions, lectures, research, exhibits, and events that enhance the role of the book in our society.

The Center for the Book's activities are supported by tax-deductible gifts from individuals and organizations. We are grateful to the W.W. Norton Company for a contribution toward the expenses of the ASE anniversary occasion and to the Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, for funds that helped support this publication.

John Y. Cole
Executive Director
The Center for the Book



THE ARMED SERVICES EDITIONS AN INTRODUCTION

• *John Y. Cole*

THE Armed Services Editions introduced thousands of American soldiers and sailors to the pleasures of reading. Between 1943 and 1947, nearly 123 million copies of 1,322 titles of these flat, wide, and very pocketable paperbacks were distributed to U.S. Armed Forces around the world.[1] Best-sellers, classics, mysteries, history, westerns, and poetry were part of each shipment. For most of the U.S. troops overseas, Armed Services Editions were the only books that were easily available. And never had so many books found so many enthusiastic readers.

How did it happen? The idea of producing low-cost books for overseas distribution originated in 1942 in the U.S. Army. Ray L. Trautman, a young officer who headed the army Library Section, developed the scheme with assistance from H. Stahley Thompson, a U.S. Army graphic arts specialist. A key part of the plan was to use rotary presses normally used for printing magazines but available during wartime for other purposes because of the drop in the production of consumer goods. But nothing on a large scale could be accomplished unless American publishers would accept the plan and allow current books to be reprinted. In January 1943, Trautman and Thompson took their proposal to Malcolm Johnson of D. Van Nostrand Company, who was a member of the executive committee of the Council on Books in Wartime. The council was the catalyst that turned a good idea from the U.S. Army into an efficient cooperative enterprise which involved the army, the navy, the War Production Board, over seventy publishing firms, and more than a dozen printing houses, composition firms, and paper suppliers.

The Council on Books in Wartime was a group of trade book publishers, librarians, and booksellers formed in 1942 to use books to contribute "to the war effort of the United Peoples." The council viewed books as "weapons in the war of ideas," and the notion of distributing inexpensive paperbacks to American troops overseas on a massive scale appealed to its members. Malcolm Johnson proposed that the council not only support but actually operate the entire project. A detailed plan of operation, negotiated with the armed forces and among the publishers themselves, was drawn up and

presented to the council's membership by W. Warder Norton, president of W.W. Norton & Company and chairman of the council's executive committee. Concessions had to be made to overcome objections from certain publishers. For example, a legal commitment was made against the postwar dumping of surplus books, and "textbooks, educational books, and scientific and technical books" were excluded. But it was W. W. Norton's firm support of the plan, his conviction that "this is the most valuable thing that bookmen can undertake in the conduct of the war," that convinced the publishers, and in May 1943 the project was established as a council activity.[2] The navy had agreed to participate and Trautman's counterpart, Isabel DuBois, chief navy librarian, added her suggestions. Philip Van Doren Stern, the former executive editor of Pocket Books and an authority on printing production, was named project manager, and Armed Services Editions, Inc., a nonprofit organization, was established and under way.

The plan called for the books to be sold to the army and navy by the council at cost of manufacture (estimated at six cents a volume) plus 10 percent for overhead. The books were distributed overseas only, and thus kept out of the civilian market and competition with book sales at home. Authors and publishers each received a royalty of one-half cent per copy. This agreement was strictly enforced. For example, Irving Stone, whose books *Lust for Life* and *Immortal Wife* were published in the series, tried to "block off the royalties" on his books—"on the grounds that [they] were a small enough contribution to make to the war effort"—but was told "that other authors might need the money and so a firm policy had to be set."[3]

Five printing firms agreed to produce the books at less than half their normal percentage of profit. Portability was the first consideration; each book had to fit in a pocket. Yet the rotary presses to be used were designed for magazines, not for pocket-sized publications. The solution was to print the books "two up," or in pairs, one book above the other, and then to separate them by a horizontal cut. In other words, as John Jamieson states in his *Books for the*

Army, "they were to be printed as magazines and then cut in half to make pocket-sized books." Two magazine sizes were agreed on: that of the *Reader's Digest*, which was printed on the presses of three of the participating printers, and that of the pulp magazines printed by the other two firms. Jamieson explains:

> Fairly short books were to be printed on the [*Reader's Digest*] size presses, and when the pairs had been separated by "slicing," the resulting books would measure 5 1/2 by 3 7/8 inches. Longer books were to be printed on pulp size presses; after slicing, their dimensions would be 6 1/2 by 4 1/2 inches. In both sizes, the text would be printed in double columns of type and, of course, the books would have to be bound on the short rather than the long side.[4]

An unpaid advisory committee made up of prominent members of the publishing and literary world selected the books. The original members were John Farrar, William Sloane, Jeanne Flexner, Nicholas Wreden, Mark Van Doren, Amy Loveman, and Harry Hansen. The committee met twice a week and made its selections primarily from current and forthcoming publications submitted in book or proof form by publishers. Recreational reading was the first aim; committee members chose a mixture of fiction and nonfiction titles, mostly current, that catered to "all levels of taste within reasonable limits." The initial goal of fifty books a month was soon reduced, for practical considerations, to thirty. The first book published (No. 1 in the "A" series) was *The Education of Hyman Kaplan* by Leo Rosten, who happened to be working in the Office of War Information at the time. Mr. Rosten remembers with pride that "my book was the first pulled out of the cookie jar, where it mingled with the other selections. A pocket-sized edition of H*Y*M*A*N K*A*P*L*A*N for our troops—and, as the first in the planned series—[was] immensely surprising (and welcome) to me."[5]

The books chosen by the advisory committee also had to be acceptable to both the army, represented by Ray Trautman, and the navy, represented by Isabel DuBois. Naturally there were dis-

agreements, but they were primarily on matters of taste. The advisory committee tended to favor books with serious literary pretensions; Ray Trautman looked with favor on popular best-sellers, westerns, and mysteries; and Isabel DuBois was somewhere between. DuBois, however, rejected several titles that the navy had already ordered in quantity through its centralized book procurement system, and, as a result, there were several omissions the army felt were "regrettable," particularly James Farrell's *Studs Lonigan*.[6]

The Armed Services Editions venture was surprisingly free from censorship. There was a form of self-imposed censorship adhered to through "guidelines of acceptability," but the guidelines themselves were not controversial. No books were approved that contained statements or attitudes offensive to our Allies, any religious or racial group, or any trade or profession or that were not in accord "with the spirit of American democracy." Also excluded were books which "may give aid and comfort to the enemy, or which may be detrimental to our own war effort." Two books initially approved but eventually dropped through exercise of the army's veto power were George Santayana's *Persons and Places* (Santayana's views, a reviewer noted, "although brilliant, are dubious as to democracy") and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*, which a proofreader felt was "a bitter attack on the Mormons."[7] Nine other books by Zane Grey were published, however, and the list of other authors included in the series (among them Willa Cather, James M. Cain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Carl Sandburg, John Steinbeck, Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, and Mark Twain) indicates that the army and the navy used their authority discreetly.

One censorship attempt evaporated quickly when the correct facts became known. When Louis Adamic's *Native's Return* was published in 1934, it contained several paragraphs that were interpreted as sympathetic to communism. Adamic removed these passages from the next edition, which was the one reprinted as an Armed Services Edition in 1943. Until it was realized that the offending text was not in the ASE edition, however, Serbian-American organizations and Congressman George A. Dondero protested vehemently against

the book's inclusion in the ASE program. To Dondero, in fact, its inclusion demonstrated how the Council on Books in Wartime was a distributor of "Communist propaganda."[8]

The most serious attempt at censorship occurred in the summer of 1944 with the approval of Title V of the Soldier Voting Act of 1944, which placed severe limitations on the distribution to members of the armed forces of books, magazines, newspapers, radio broadcasts, and motion pictures which had been paid for or sponsored by the government.[9] The bill was sponsored by Sen. Robert A. Taft, who feared the armed forces would distribute political propaganda favoring the reelection of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to a fourth term. The War Department complied strictly with the provisions of this controversial measure, and the Armed Services Editions project hired additional readers, including Mrs. Stephen Vincent Benét and Louis Untermeyer, to screen the selections. When the army revealed that it had banned such works as Charles A. Beard's history *The Republic* and Catherine Drinker Bowen's biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Yankee from Olympus*, there were vigorous protests. The army continued its zealous enforcement of the act, and soon Congress amended and drastically liberalized the new law. E. B. White's *One Man's Meat*, one of four of White's books published as Armed Services Editions, was also caught up in the Voting Act controversy and temporarily banned. Mr. White recalls that he "was never told why, but I always like having a book banned. It shows somebody has read it."[10]

Each Armed Services Edition was limited to a certain number of pages in order to keep its weight within prescribed limits for shipping. About seventy of the books selected were too long and had to be abridged. This fact was always indicated on the cover, but the small size of the volumes led many people to believe, mistakenly, that all 1,322 volumes had been abridged or perhaps even expurgated. Free-lance editors were hired to shorten books such as *The Moonstone* and *Moby Dick*, and *Forever Amber* was abridged to about half of its original size by A. H. Lass, head of the English department in a Brooklyn high school. Some authors did their own

cutting, including Francis Hackett (*Henry the Eighth*), Jean Stafford (*Boston Adventure*), and Wallace Stegner (*Big Rock Candy Mountain*). Stegner remembers that "Louis Untermeyer appraised my book as being much too fat—he wanted it down to a quarter of a million words, as I recall. I confidently set out to cut it. The first 30,000 were easy, but there remained approximately 70,000 to come out. With anguish, I cut another 20,000 before I gave up. Then Louis and, I believe, Philip Van Doren Stern took out the remaining 50,000. I never dared look at the result, though I have a couple copies on my shelf."[11]

The first ASE sets, consisting of thirty titles apiece, were shipped as freight to overseas bases. The books were packed in wooden cases holding twenty sets each. One set per month was issued for every 150 men; one set per month for every fifty hospital beds; and one set per month for every isolated unit, no matter what its size. But as production increased, the need for a more efficient method of distribution became apparent. Direct shipment by mail was instituted in the late spring of 1944 with the "H" series. With series "J" the number of books per set was increased to thirty-two and distribution to hospitals in the United States began. In March 1945, with series "Q," the number of titles per set was increased to forty. Maximum production, 155,000 sets for the army and navy, was reached with series "W."[12]

There were two Armed Services Editions production programs. In the first, between September 1943 and September 1946, from series "A" through series "HH," nearly 120 million volumes were produced and distributed at an average cost of 5.9 cents per volume. The postwar program lasted until September 1947 and produced approximately three million volumes at a cost of 10.9 cents a volume. Much of the cost of the postwar program was defrayed by Editions for the Armed Services, Inc., out of the surplus it had accumulated during the war. H. Stahley Thompson became manager of the project in December 1945 after Philip Van Doren Stern resigned. Paul Postell succeeded Ray Trautman as chief of the Library Section, and thus as the army officer in charge.[13]

Distribution of ASE books by direct mail was an improvement, but depended on the accuracy of the mailing list. Another difficulty was that distribution of the books was on a first-come, first-served basis in most units. These were minor problems, however, compared to the overall success of the distribution system and the overwhelming popularity of the books among the troops. Armed Services Editions naturally were less plentiful in combat than behind the front lines, but on some occasions combat troops were fairly well supplied. This was true, for example, of the troops that went from Hawaii into the Marshall Islands, the Marianas, and Okinawa. The most notable mass distribution to combat troops took place in the marshaling areas in southern England just before the Normandy invasion. One copy of an Armed Services Edition was issued to each soldier as he boarded the invasion barge.

Having had their books published in Armed Services Editions still means a great deal to most authors. David Lavender, "even over the span of forty years," vividly recalls "the lift I received from the announcement that *One Man's West* had been chosen. It was the first adult book of mine to be published and having the recognition come so soon was a tremendous stimulus. Fifty-three thousand copies! I could scarcely believe such figures!" Moreover, "having those fifty-three thousand copies spread far and wide gave the book a running start toward three hard-cover editions, followed by its paperback reprint by the University of Nebraska Press." Emily Kimbrough and Cornelia Otis Skinner, authors of *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*, "were more proud of being included in the choices for [Armed Services Editions] than of being selected Book-of-the-Month." The publication of his *Men of Popular Music* and *The Story of George Gershwin* as Armed Services Editions had "a particularly significant meaning" for author David Ewen, since at the time he himself was in the armed forces "and knew only too well what a solace books could be."[14]

Helen MacInnes (*While Still We Live*) received many letters from GI's who enjoyed her book. "One in particular," she relates, "said he had read little until [the ASE edition] got him *enjoying* literature.

From there, he read constantly, and after his service went to college. He ended with a Ph.D. and sent me a copy. It was dedicated to me, the writer of the novel that started his reading." Kay Boyle was proud to learn that her novel *Avalanche*, which deals with the French Resistance, was useful reading for pilots and crew members before they left England for bombing missions over France. Irving Stone, who feels the ASE project "was one of the most significant accomplishments of our war effort," particularly recalls letters from soldiers and sailors who told him that they "sometimes read a book straight through for the first time in their lives."[15]

Wallace Stegner is proud to have been part of "that first great experiment in the mass production and mass distribution of books," and he notes that "the paperback revolution that followed owed an incalculable debt to the Armed Services Editions." As for the future, "In the next war, presumably, there will not be time to read. So I have no recommendation for future Armed Services Editions. Probably they will be on microfiche. But I give the original idea my gratitude and my applause. I think it did something important."[15]

Notes

1. The precise number of volumes delivered to the army and the navy by Editions for the Armed Services, Inc., is 122,951,031. This introduction is based largely on John Jamieson's *Books for the Army: The Army Library Service in the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), hereafter cited as Jamieson. John Jamieson was on the staff of the War Department Library Section during 1944 and 1945. He used official records and over two hundred interviews in writing *Books for the Army*. His history of the ASE project in *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.: A History together with the Complete List of 1324 Books Published for American Armed Forces Overseas* (New York, 1948), is a slightly condensed version of chapter 12 in *Books for the Army*.

The correct number of books printed is 1,322, which includes 99 reprints. The figure given in *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.*, 1,324, was arrived at because of confusion about the printings of *Webster's New Handy Dictionary*. The dictionary was listed under two separate numbers in series "V." According to Jamieson, the separate numbering was "for convenience in assembling the sets." When the dictionary was reprinted in series "EE," it was again listed twice, but under the original two

numbers, thereby keeping the count accurate. Jamieson explains that later, however, the dictionaries were "counted as two 'originals' and two 'reprints' rather than one each" (p. 293), resulting in the figure 1,324.

A corrected version of the author index in *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.* is included as an appendix to this volume.

2. Jamieson, pp. 145–47. The aims of the Council of Books in Wartime are listed by Richard L. Simon, chairman, Simon and Schuster, Inc., in his introduction to *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.* A list of the directors of the council is also included. Dedicated to Norton, this volume unfortunately misplaces his initial, incorrectly calling him Warder W. Norton.

3. Irving Stone to the author, December 27, 1982, files, the Center for the Book.

4. Jamieson, pp. 147–48.

5. Leo Rosten to the author, November 23, 1982, files, the Center for the Book. Rosten's book was published under his pseudonym, Leonard Q. Ross.

6. Jamieson, pp. 153, 293.

7. Ibid., p. 155.

8. Ibid., p. 213. It is likely that the Library of Congress's 1934 edition of *Native's Return* was examined by Congressman Dondero, or at least by his staff, in preparing the congressman's misguided attack. The book, which is in the Library's general collections, still has paper clips (now rusted) and penciled markings around the offending passages.

9. William M. Leary provides details about this curious episode in his "Books, Soldiers, and Censorship during the Second World War," *American Quarterly* 20 (1968): 237–45. Jamieson describes it in chapter 15, "Censorship and the Soldier Voting Law."

10. Jamieson, p. 216. Leary, pp. 239–41. E. B. White to the author, December 21, 1982, files, the Center for the Book.

11. Jamieson, p. 293. Wallace Stegner to the author, December 21, 1982, files, the Center for the Book.

12. Jamieson, pp. 155–56.

13. Ibid., p. 156.

14. David Lavender, Emily Kimbrough, and David Ewen to the author, December 1982, December 22, 1982, and December 19, 1982, respectively, files, the Center for the Book.

15. Helen MacInnes, Kay Boyle, and Irving Stone to the author, January 4, 1983, January 1, 1983, and December 27, 1982, respectively, files, the Center for the Book.

16. Wallace Stegner to the author, December 21, 1982, files, the Center for the Book.

THE ARMED SERVICES EDITIONS IN PUBLISHING HISTORY

• *Michael Hackenberg*

Michael Hackenberg is assistant professor at the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago, where he teaches the history of books and printing. He received his B.A. (1969) from Wichita State University and an M.L.S. (1973) and Ph.D. (1983) from the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include "Hawking Subscription Books in 1870: A Salesman's Prospectus from Western Pennsylvania," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America *78 (1984), "Reformation Pamphleteering,"* Library Quarterly *53 (April 1983), and "The Shop Inventory of Benedix Gerssner, Bookbinder of Braunschweig,"* Library, *6th ser., 2 (1980). He is an ardent collector of Armed Services Editions and currently counts 800 volumes in his collection.*

EXPERIMENTATION in paperback publishing did not begin with the arrival of Armed Services Editions (ASE) Series A in September 1943.[1] Its antecedents—at least in terms of format—go back to the pocket-sized, clean-cut Aldine editions of the classics published for scholars at the end of the fifteenth century. Successful mass distribution of publications dates back to the literally millions of shabbily produced but scathingly effective tracts and pamphlets of the Lutheran Reformation and the sixteenth-century wars of religion. A quarter of a million copies of Luther's vernacular tracts alone appeared before August of 1520.[2] The nineteenth century too witnessed important developments in paperback publishing. The Tauchnitz editions of the 1840s were tied to the opening of the Leipzig-Dresden railroad line and the need for railway reading. During the same period, vast numbers of cheaply manufactured "dime novels" of the Beadles and their imitators poured forth in thousands of titles in the paper-wrapped "library" series of cheap fiction, dying out only after the successful 1891 implementation of international copyright. Nor can the unequivocal publishing success of that great entrepreneur Ernst Haldeman-Julius be ignored. From Girard, Kansas, he skillfully (if somewhat notoriously) advertised that a college education could be obtained at a cost of $2.50 and in the process he may have sold upward of five hundred million copies of his *Little Blue Books* between 1919 and the early years of the 1950s—printing them "two-up" at that.[3]

More immediate antecedents of the ASE were, of course, Allen Lane's English Penguins, which demonstrated during the late 1930s the primary factor in the success of any paperback series—a marketing network capable of placing the paperback directly into the hands of the reader-consumer. In Lane's case, the Woolworth's department store chain provided the network. Earlier attempts to launch paperback series in the United States had often foundered upon that point. Examples include the short-lived but attractively produced Paper and Boni Books, distributed mostly by subscription from 1929 to 1931, when they fell victim to the depression, or the Modern Age Books, 1937–1940, which successfully tied into the

newspaper and magazine marketing network but attempted to resemble the hardcover book, complete with dust jacket and (even rarer to find now) an occasional protective cardboard sleeve.[4]

The Penguin triumph found its American counterpart in June 1939 when Robert de Graff inaugurated the first ten titles of the Pocket Books, following an initial trial run of *The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck. An attractive design coupled with a network of independent wholesale distributors soon demonstrated success in sales figures of 10,000 copies per title (swelling to a second printing of 15,000) and by that year's end combined sales of thirty-four titles in a total of 1.5 million copies (an average 44,100 copies per title). Despite war looming on the horizon, the following year de Graff sold fifty-three new titles in his series, selling a total of 4.5 million copies (84,900 per title) or doubling his output in one year.[5] The example tempted many publishers, despite the uncertainties and shortages of the war. Some, such as the one-year venture of the Milwaukee-based *Red Arrow Books* that collapsed immediately in 1939, failed quickly. Others, however, held on during the war, surviving court challenge and holding their own against the cut-throat competition of magazine distribution. Avon won a court battle against the Pocket Books complaint of unfair imitation of logo that lasted from 1942 to 1944. Popular Library and Dell Books came out ahead in the distribution struggle. By the war's end, the stampede for new markets and new readers was under way. Ian Ballantine left Penguin to form Bantam in 1945, and Kurt Enoch and Victor Weybright set up the New American Library of World Literature in the spring of 1948. Fawcett successfully manipulated its flashy and titillating cover art to promote its Gold Medal series of fiction in 1950. Ace got its thirty-five-cent double novels going in 1952.[6]

The Armed Services Editions project developed in the midst of these rapidly moving events and emerged from a wartime atmosphere that nevertheless did not stifle innovative publishing ideas. ASE books had a captive audience of millions of people far from home, who found themselves in a situation where periods of bore-

dom alternated with periods of intense activity. The ASE series set the final imprimatur on cheap, mass-market reading material. Brilliant book design, unusual cooperation among the participants, satisfactory distribution, and a carefully targeted and receptive audience were factors that combined to make the ASE project a success.[7]

A sense of pending triumph and of crossing a new threshold was felt in the American publishing industry and was shared by several of the ASE organizers from the very inception of the program in 1943. Pearl Buck, in her dedication to the earlier sample volume for Pocket Books, mentioned her pleasure that her books might appear in inexpensive editions, since "surely books ought to be within the reach of everybody." W. Warder Norton, in his capacity as chairman of the executive committee overseeing the Council on Books in Wartime, likewise appreciated the historical significance of the ASE series. In a 1942 letter to the council outlining the operational plans for the series, he said, "The net result to the industry and to the future of book reading can only be helpful. The very fact that millions of men will have an opportunity to learn what a book is and what it can mean is likely now and in post-war years to exert a tremendous influence on the post-war course of the industry."

Norton went on to apologize for mentioning "these rather selfish aspects of the plan," speaking then of the lack of precedence for the undertaking and the need to guarantee the necessary economic structure to protect the publishers who were to participate.[8] Those structures were, of course, successfully implemented: provision for mostly overseas distribution, no dumping on the local American market, destruction at war's end of any remaining stock, and no textbook publishing in the series. On the other hand, publishers received from the well-designed format a kind of splendid but free advertising of the hardbound titles whose copyright they controlled that were then in print. Thus, it seems clear that the industry sensed a chance to make major inroads into new markets with minimal risk. And these inroads were in fact made; the impact of the 1,322 titles printed and marketed between 1943 and 1947

in an almost staggering 123 million copies was not lost upon those first exposed to the mass-market paperback. According to Freeman Lewis, the postwar paperback market saw the issuance of 950 new titles in 1951 in 230 million copies.[9] The ASE paradigm contributed to the postwar success for the American paperback industry.

But what of the project's impact on the readers themselves? The selection criteria had to be reached through compromise between the army and navy, which wanted current best-sellers and lighter, recreational reading for a very diverse clientele, and the publishers, who favored more serious fiction.[10] Certainly, the compromising of literary standards was minimal, as shown by the 1945 *Saturday Review of Literature*'s presentation of its Award for Distinguished Service to American Literature to both the Council on Books in Wartime and the manager of the series, Philip Van Doren Stern.[11] Countless contemporary records attest to the ubiquity of the series throughout the theaters of the war. Accounts received at council headquarters ranged from the story of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (I-261 in the series) being read in a French foxhole to the rather maudlin account of the fair-haired dead marine private on Saipan who had a yellowed copy of *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* sticking out of his back pocket, to the July 1, 1944, field report of A. J. Liebling, the *New Yorker* correspondent who testified to ASE being read on the landing craft at Normandy. In fact, eight thousand sets of series "C" and "D" were reserved for distribution to that zone.[12]

Best-sellers were, of course, almost automatic selections for inclusion in the series. Zofia Kossak's *Blessed Are the Meek*, an April 1944 Book of the Month Club selection, was chosen for production in the ASE format by mid-May of that same year. In his history of the series, John Jamieson lists 246 titles of contemporary fiction, making up 19 percent of the total output. When the demand for additional titles for monthly selection increased substantially at the end of 1944, with increases up to forty titles per month, a sizeable amount of fiction from an earlier period was relied on to fill in the monthly gaps. At least six imprints from the 1930s or earlier were added monthly after 1944, and "made" editions of special literary

anthologies—many of them edited by Louis Untermeyer—were published as well.[13]

Jamieson polled authors to see what kind of responses they had received from ASE readers. Readers' reactions showed them to be most receptive to certain authors.[14] H. Allen Smith estimated his five titles (two of which, *Low Man on a Totem Pole* and *Lost in the Horse Latitudes*, were reprinted) had generated five to ten thousand letters. Betty Smith, author of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (also reprinted by ASE), received ten times more service mail than letters from civilians reacting to her novel. Louis Bromfield and Kenneth Roberts reported receiving fifteen hundred to two thousand letters. Lloyd Douglas's best-seller *The Robe* was also reprinted by popular demand, and its author heard from a thousand service readers.

Authors who received from two hundred to five hundred letters were a mixed company—Hervey Allen, MacKinlay Kantor, H. L. Mencken, Esther Forbes, Charles Beard (for *The Republic*), and E. B. White (whose essays on New England life prompted pangs of homesickness from many of his correspondents).

James Thurber's humor was apparently appreciated by service readers. His six volumes in the series generated upward of two hundred replies, in which 75 percent of the respondents reported that they had first encountered his work in ASE format. The authors of westerns seem not to have received too much mail, although Ernest Haycox (who, with eighteen ASE titles, was the most prolific writer to appear in the series) got about two hundred letters.

John Steinbeck was generally pleased with his "extremely friendly" responses, and a biographer informs us that Willa Cather, who remained publicly aloof during the war, was finally coaxed by her publishers to allow three of her novels to appear in the series. She personally answered some of the "mass-mail" she is said to have received from abroad.[15] After Katherine Anne Porter's "made" book of *Selected Short Stories* appeared in the spring of 1945, she received most of her six hundred replies from readers within the following six months, including letters from aspiring writers who wished to discuss techniques and ideas. Following the war and while teaching at Stanford, Wallace Stegner lectured to a "flood of GI students,"

many of whom had first read *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (even with its 100,000-word excision) as ASE N-32. Herman Wouk, on the other hand, does not remember any "flood of responses" for ASE 1265 *Aurora Dawn* ("a sin of my youth," as he recalls), but that volume appeared in the much more limited issue of the postwar ASE series and in only 25,000 copies.[16]

The litany could go on, but the trend is clear. Designed like most truly mass-market products to be digested and discarded, the ASE volumes added impulse to a publishing development that was to revolutionize American book-buying habits. That such an experiment succeeded so well during a most adverse period in the nation's history speaks highly of the cooperative spirit adopted by participating authors, publishers, and the government itself. That the immediate reader response was also positive seems clear from the correspondence received by both authors and the Council on Books in Wartime.

In the early 1950s a returned serviceman from the Pacific theater (who is now an emeritus professor at Berkeley) offered an entire footlocker of Armed Services Editions to his employer, a major research library in Chicago. His offer was graciously declined. It was an opportunity missed, for today any library would be hard pressed to assemble anything like a complete collection of this fascinating set of books. A Virginia bookseller has been trying to achieve this feat for nearly thirty years and still lacks about a hundred titles. Little books, indeed, have their fates, and it is appropriate that we observe the anniversary of an almost forgotten series in American publishing history, whose influence is still felt by us today.

Notes

1. Brief surveys on the antecedents of mass-market paperbacks can be found in Frank Schick, *The Paperbound Book in America: The History of Paperbacks and Their European Background* (New York, 1958), Hans Schmoller, "The Paperback Revolution," in Asa Briggs, ed., *Essays in the History of Publishing in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the House of Longman, 1724–1974* (London, 1974), 283–318, and Thomas Bonn, *Undercover: An Illustrated History of American Mass Market Paperbacks* (New York, 1982).

2. The volume of Luther's paper-covered tracts is discussed by Hans Rupprich, *Die deutsche Literatur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Barock*, vol. 1 (Munich, 1970), 33.

3. On the Tauchnitz series, see William B. Todd, "Firma Tauchnitz, a Further Investigation," *Publishing History* 2 (1978), 7–26. Much has been published on the Beadles, but the most comprehensive study remains Albert Johannsen's three-volume *The House of Beadle and Adams and Its Dime and Nickel Novels, the Story of a Vanished Literature* (Norman, Okla., 1950–62). Indispensable for the Little Blue Books is the lengthy article by Richard Johnson and G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Haldeman-Julius 'Little Blue Books' as a Bibliographical Problem," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 64 (1970), 29–78.

4. These early paperback series are discussed by Schick and Bonn. Note also the lavishly illustrated work of the Dutch paperback collector, Piet Schreuders, *Paperbacks U.S.A., a Graphic History* (San Diego, 1981).

5. Schreuders, pp. 18–31, devotes considerable space to the Pocket Books' success, as do John Tebbel, *Paperback Books: A Pocket History* (New York, 1964), and Freeman Lewis, *A Brief History of Pocket Books, 1939–1967* (New York, 1967).

6. This more aggressive cover art prompted congressional hearings in December 1952, whose significance for paperback history warrants further study. See U.S. Congress, House, *Report of the Select Committee on Current Pornographic Material, House of Representatives, Eighty-Second Congress* (Washington, 1952), 82d Cong., 2d sess., H. Rept. 2510.

7. See my accompanying compilation of secondary literature on the Armed Services Editions series. The best history remains that of John Jamieson, under the title *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.; A History together with the Complete List of 1324 Books Published for American Armed Forces Overseas* (New York, 1948).

8. Jamieson, p. 9. See also his *Books for the Army; The Army Library Service in the Second World War* (New York, 1950), 146.

9. Freeman Lewis, "Paperbound Books in America," *Publishers' Weekly*, November 15, 1952, 2015.

10. Jamieson, pp. 18–20.

11. "SRL Award," *Saturday Review of Literature* 28, no. 32 (August 11, 1945), 18.

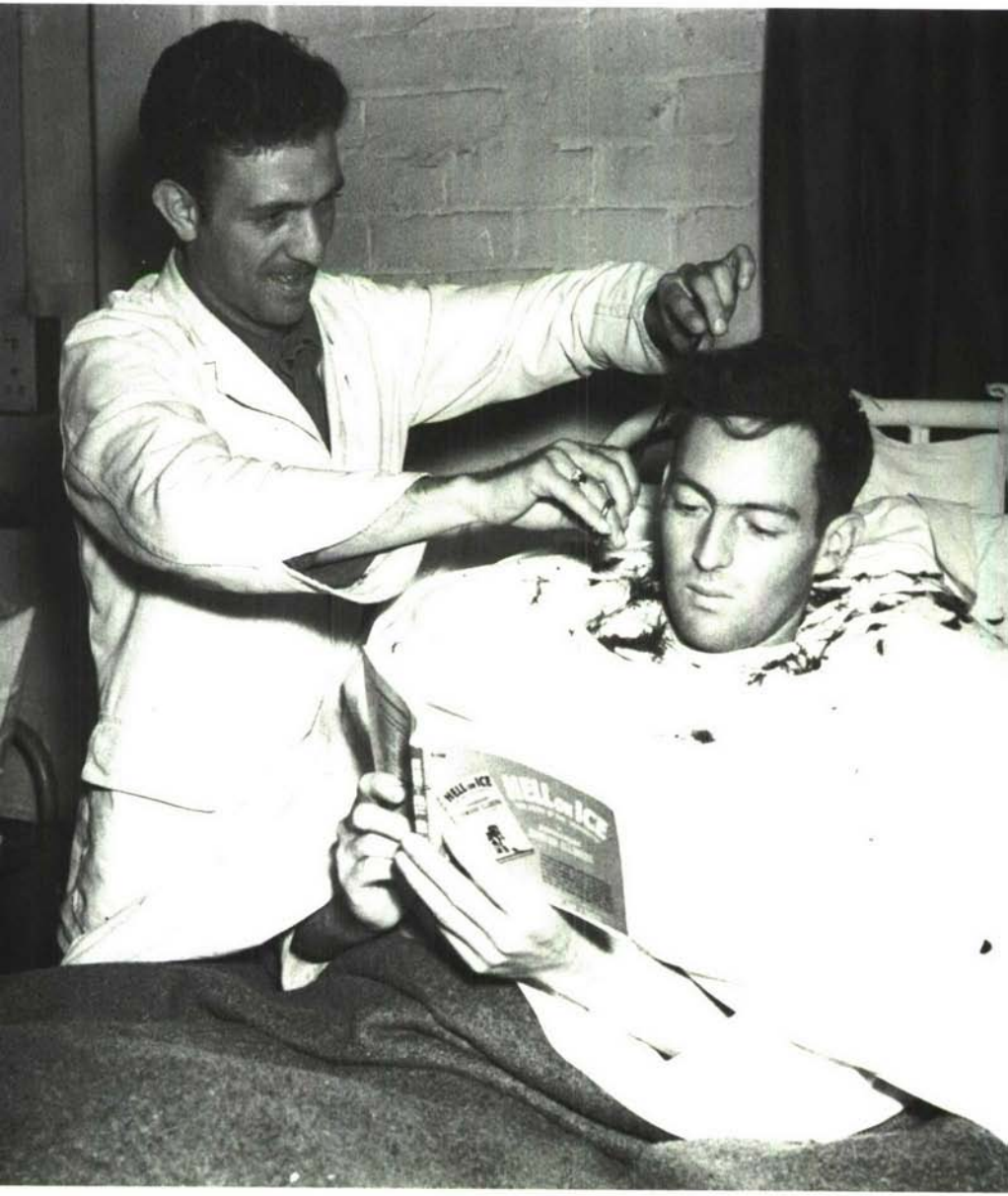
12. Jamieson, pp. 26–31.

13. Jamieson, pp. 17–29.

14. John Jamieson, "Armed Services Editions and G.I. Fan Mail," *Publishers' Weekly*, July 12, 1947, 148–52.

15. Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, *Willa Cather, a Memoir* (Philadelphia and New York, 1953), 271.

16. Wallace Stegner to John Y. Cole, December 21, 1982, and Herman Wouk to Cole, December 22, 1982, files, the Center for the Book.



RECOLLECTIONS OF AN ASE COLLECTOR

• *Matthew J. Bruccoli*

Matthew J. Bruccoli has written or edited more than thirty volumes in the field of American literature. His most recent book is James Gould Cozzens: A Life Apart *(1983). He holds degrees from Yale and the University of Virginia. He is Jefferies Professor of English at the University of South Carolina and a partner in Bruccoli Clark Publishers. Writing this essay has, he says, rewhetted his ASE appetite, and recently his personal collection has grown to exceed 570 volumes.*

I WASN'T there when they were passing out the Armed Services Editions. I'm not certain when I first saw one; but it was around 1955 while I was a graduate student at the University of Virginia—in which case the book was almost certainly shown to me by John Cook Wyllie, the great librarian who introduced me to many things. My initial interest was stimulated by the circumstance that there were two F. Scott Fitzgerald titles in ASE: *The Great Gatsby* and *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Stories* (a "made" book). It took me more than ten years to acquire them. Along the way I got hooked.

The treasures are the "made" books that were published only in ASE, such as *A Rose for Emily and Other Stories* and *Selected Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. These qualify as first-and-only editions and are mandatory items in an author collection.

The usefulness of an author collection is in assembling and preserving the evidence about an author's career: the forms in which his work appeared, the ways his books were distributed, how he reached his audience. Collecting first editions (that is, first printings of first editions) is largely an exercise in check writing. Indeed, the collecting can be delegated to a few competent dealers. The hard work comes in assembling every printing of every edition, including all the paperback reprints. The formats, the covers, the prices, the blurbs provide the data of literary history. The only way to put together such a collection—an archive, really—is by handling lots of books in unlikely places. Linton Massey used to send me into used paperback stores because he didn't want to get his suits dusty; nonetheless, he was a good collector and understood that he needed the dusty paperbacks. At the time of his death Linton had one of the best Faulkner collections in the world—as well as an excellent wardrobe.

In 1959–60 I was living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and spending weeks in Washington. My active ASE collecting—or, rather, acquiring—dates from this time. On Saturdays I went booking with Roger Stoddard in the Boston area, and we usually caught a few ASE. Jack Neiburg—one of the nicest bookdealers who ever

lived—used to save them for me. At that time there were half a dozen junk book shops on Washington's skid row, one of which always had some ASE at two for twenty-five cents—or maybe it was three for twenty-five cents.

At first I bought only the authors I was collecting—Fitzgerald, Chandler, Wolfe, Cozzens, O'Hara, Lardner, Hemingway—and thereby passed up titles I may never get another chance at. I was slow to understand that the ASE provided a collecting situation with necessary elements for the long haul: There were many titles; they were cheap; they were hard to find (many of them were left behind in Europe and the Pacific). But these characteristics also apply to bottle caps. The key element was literary or cultural value, and I belatedly recognized that the ASE possessed such value as a series in addition to the desirability of individual titles.

The ASE project was the biggest book giveaway in history: 122,951,031 copies of 1,322 books. Moreover, it was the biggest *good* book giveaway in history. Servicemen who had not previously been much exposed to books were provided with them when they had nothing else to do except read. James Dickey, a former engineering student, read the ASE of Marcus Goodrich's *Delilah*, James Stephens's *Etched in Moonlight*, and Carl Sandburg's *Selected Poems* in the Philippines.

There is no way to determine how many converts to literature—or, less elegantly, to reading—were made by the ASE. The fix was free. Moreover, it seems highly probable that some postwar reputations were stimulated by the introduction of authors in the ASE to readers who had never read them before. One hundred fifty-five thousand ASE copies of *The Great Gatsby* were distributed—as against the twenty-five thousand copies of the novel printed by Scribners between 1925 and 1942. Was there a connection between the ASE publication of *Gatsby* and *Diamond as Big as the Ritz* and the Fitzgerald revival that commenced in the late 1940s?

Armed with a solid rationale to pacify my wife, in the mid-1960s I began acquiring every ASE I could find. It was too late. I never hit the mother lode, although for a long time I was convinced

that somewhere I would find a warehouse full of them. I still fantasize that there are Quonset huts filled with them on Pacific atolls. My efforts were a matter of picking up one or two at a time. The biggest strike I ever made was some thirty copies.

Collecting ASE is difficult because they never really became collectors' items, except for certain titles. Their unprepossessing appearance probably discouraged "respectable" dealers from taking them seriously—which means pricing them high enough to make it worthwhile to handle them. (One crackpot refused to sell me his batch of copies because they were "government property.") I've never seen a catalog devoted to ASE. There are used-paperback specialists, but none that I know of specializes in ASE.

The ASE collector never knows where they will turn up, which makes for a lot of excursions to unlikely places. I've bought them in secondhand furniture stores, girlie-magazine emporia, a railroad station newsstand, a barber shop, and various unclassifiable roadside enterprises. The best pickings were on skid rows in any city. I doubt if this circumstance can be attributed to the high literary level of bums. Rather, it resulted from the cheap rents and the kinds of marginal used-articles businesses that can survive on these mean streets.

Apart from literary collectors, there seems to be a breed of paperback collectors who seek ASE for reasons not entirely clear to me. The complete list of ASE is included in the latest edition of Kevin Hancer's *Paperback Price Guide* (New York: Harmony Books, 1983), and the prices assigned to them are puzzling. Most of the titles are valued at $1.20 for a good copy, $3.60 for a fine copy, or $6.00 for a mint copy. Only sixteen titles are listed at more than $20 for a mint copy: Stoker's *Dracula* ($35); Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* and *The Return of Tarzan* ($50 each); Wells's *The Time Machine* ($25), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* ($30), *The War of the Worlds* ($30), and *The Food of the Gods* ($30); Lovecraft's *The Dunwich Horror* ($50); Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and *The Lady in the Lake* ($50 each); Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *She* ($25 each); Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* ($30); Shelley's *Frankenstein*

($35). According to Hancer, the most valuable title is George Lowther's *Adventures of Superman*, priced at $75. These data indicate that the ASE market has been established mainly by sci-fi collectors and those interested in the supernatural.

Absent from the blue-chip list are the ASE abridgments of Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* and *Of Time and the River*—key desiderata for a Wolfe collector. The first ASE, Leo Rosten's book *The Education of Hyman Kaplan*, ought to bring more than $1.20 or $3.60 or $6.00. I'll pay $20.

After more than twenty years my total stands at a disappointing 518, and it gets harder all the time. The last one I found was in August 1982, in The Pansy Patch at St. Andrews, New Brunswick. Although my quest for completion seems doomed, my ASE collection remains one of my favorite bibliophilic endeavors because there has been so much pleasure associated with it and so many other happy finds in places where there were no ASE. I remember in particular the scouting trips with Hy Kritzer, a noble librarian who had carried *A Wartime Whitman* (S-1) through Italy and France.

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A NOTE ON ASE COLLECTIONS IN LIBRARIES

Apparently the only complete set of the Armed Services Editions is in the Library of Congress, where the volumes are arranged in order of publication (from series "A" through series "TT") in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. Most of the volumes were a gift from the Council on Books in Wartime. The University of Alabama Library also has a set, received as duplicates from the Library of Congress, which lacks only sixteen titles. The set is displayed there in the special collections reading room, and Curator Joyce H. Lamont reports that the books always draw comments from World War II veterans, who point out titles they read. Furthermore, "many tell me they have copies of especially meaningful books at home."

Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library has 156 volumes in its ASE collection, donated by Ray L. Trautman, who, after the war, became a professor at Columbia's School of Library Service. The department also has the John Jamieson Papers on the Editions for the Armed Services, a collection of about sixty-five hundred items, mostly correspondence, reports, photographs, and other materials gathered and used by Jamieson in writing his histories of the ASE project and army library services.

Princeton University Library holds more than six hundred ASE titles, housed in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. The archival files of the Council on Books in Wartime are deposited in approximately seventy-five boxes in the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton, where they are part of the library's collection of "Papers in Twentieth-Century American Statecraft and Public Policy."

APPENDIX
A List of the Armed Services Editions

This is a corrected and expanded version of the "author index" on pp. 91–139 of Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.; A History with the Complete List of 1324 Books Published for American Armed Forces Overseas *(New York, 1948). Books are listed alphabetically by author, and various titles by a single author are arranged chronologically in the order in which they were published. Series numbers, which were assigned to each title as it was published (and displayed prominently on its cover), are noted here to the left of the authors' names. The complete ASE set in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress was used in verifying entries.*

N-8 ABBOTT, E. C., and HELENA HUNTINGTON SMITH. *We Pointed Them North*

756 ABBOTT, E. C., and HELENA HUNTINGTON SMITH. *We Pointed Them North* (Reprint)

B-54 ADAMIC, LOUIS. *The Native's Return*

H-231 ADAMS, FRANKLIN P., editor. *Innocent Merriment*

Q-40 ADAMS, HENRY. *The Education of Henry Adams*

R-40 ADAMS, SAMUEL HOPKINS. *Canal Town**

931 ADAMS, SAMUEL HOPKINS. *A. Woollcott*

A-21 AGAR, HERBERT. *A Time for Greatness*

S-1 AIKEN, MAJ. WILLIAM A., editor. *A Wartime Whitman*

1237 AINSWORTH, ED (Edward M.). *Eagles Fly West**

D-96 ALBRAND, MARTHA. *Without Orders*

A-28 ALLEN, HERVEY. *Action at Aquila*

C-83 ALLEN, HERVEY. *The Forest and the Fort*

L-23 ALLEN, HERVEY. *Bedford Village*

849 ALLEN, HERVEY. *Bedford Village* (Reprint)

Q-9 ANDERSON, SHERWOOD. *Selected Short Stories*†

1018 ANDREWS, JOHN PAUL. *Your Personal Plane*

F-168 ANDREWS, ROY CHAPMAN. *Under a Lucky Star*

1160 ANDREWS, ROY CHAPMAN. *Meet Your Ancestors*

1048 ARMSTRONG, MARGARET. *Trelawny*

933 ARNO, PETER, introduction by. *The Bedside Tales**

681 ARNOLD, ELLIOTT. *Tomorrow Will Sing*

1273 ARNOLD, ELLIOTT. *Blood Brother**

K-26 ASBURY, HERBERT. *Sucker's Progress*

J-299 ASCH, SHOLEM. *The Apostle**

I-242 AYLING, KEITH. *Semper Fidelis*

I-258 BAARSLAG, KARL. *Coast Guard to the Rescue*

S-10 BAKER, DOROTHY. *Young Man with a Horn*

719 BAKER, SGT. GEORGE. *The Sad Sack*

801 BALMER, EDWIN, and PHILIP WYLIE. *When Worlds Collide*

1130 BARBER, WILLETTA ANN, and R. F. SCHABELITZ. *The Noose is Drawn*

*Abridged.
†"Made" Book; selected especially for an Armed Services Edition.

807 BARRETT, MONTE. *Sun in Their Eyes*
H-234 BARROWS, MARJORIE, and GEORGE EATON. *Box Office*
I-250 BARTON, BRUCE. *The Book Nobody Knows*
N-4 BARTON, BRUCE. *The Man Nobody Knows*
805 BAUME, ERIC. *Yankee Woman*
983 BAYER, OLIVER WELD. *An Eye for an Eye*
S-32 BAYLISS, MARGUERITE F. *The Bolinvars*
1195 BEACH, REX. *The World in His Arms*
P-29 BEARD, CHARLES A. *The Republic*
900 BEAUCHAMP, D. D. *The Full Life and Other Stories*†
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F-161 BEEBE, WILLIAM. *Jungle Peace*
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E-137 DU MAURIER, DAPHNE. *Jamaica Inn*
T-36 DU MAURIER, DAPHNE. *Rebecca*
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777 ECKSTEIN, GUSTAV. *Canary*
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EHRE, EDWARD, see MARSH, IRVING T.
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FENTON, MILDRED ADAMS, see FENTON, CARROLL LANE
E-140 FERBER, EDNA. *Cimarron*
F-165 FERBER, EDNA. *So Big*
959 FERBER, EDNA. *Great Son*
1111 FERBER, EDNA. *Saratoga Trunk*
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FIELDS, JOSEPH, see HELLMAN, LILLIAN
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J-302 FOREMAN, CAROLYN THOMAS. *Indians Abroad*
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GREEN, ALAN, see GOODMAN, JACK
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881 HAGGARD, H. RIDER. *She*
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HAWKINS, WARD, see HAWKINS, JOHN
863 HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL. *The Gray Champion and Other Tales*†

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K-14 HAYCOX, ERNEST. *The Wild Bunch*
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667 HEMINGWAY, ERNEST. *To Have and Have Not*
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L-5 HEYWARD, DU BOSE. *Porgy*
C-80 HILL, ERNESTINE. *Australian Frontier*
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E-138 HILTON, JAMES. *Random Harvest*
966 HILTON, JAMES. *So Well Remembered*
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HUFF, FRANCES, see HUFF, DARRELL
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876 IAMS, JACK. *The Countess to Boot*
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1310 JONES, IDWAL. *Vermilion*

889 KAINS, M. G. *Five Acres and Independence*
1062 KALASHNIKOFF, NICHOLAS. *Jumper*
J-294 KANE, HARNETT T. *The Bayous of Louisiana*
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G-202 KANTOR, MACKINLAY. *Arouse and Beware*
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KASNER, EDWARD, see NEWMAN, JAMES
R-2 KEATS, JOHN. *Selected Poems*†
F-167 KEITH, AGNES NEWTON. *Land below the Wind*
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KINGSLEY, SIDNEY, see HELLMAN, LILLIAN
G-198 KIPLING, RUDYARD. *Kim*
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F-156 KNIGHT, ERIC. *Lassie Come Home*
G-187 KNIGHT, ERIC. *Sam Small Flies Again*
1123 KNIGHT, KATHLEEN MOORE. *Port of Seven Strangers*
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O-8 KOBER, ARTHUR. *My Dear Bella*
697 KOBER, ARTHUR. *Thunder over the Bronx*
C-89 KOMROFF, MANUEL. *Coronet*
H-236 KOMROFF, MANUEL. *The Travels of Marco Polo*
O-30 KOSSAK, ZOFIA. *Blessed Are the Meek*
935 KRASNA, NORMAN. *Dear Ruth*
1309 KRAUSE, HERBERT. *The Thresher**
G-207 KROLL, HARRY HARRISON. *Rogues' Company*
N-30 KROLL, HARRY HARRISON, and C. M. SUBLETTE. *Perilous Journey*

1219 LA FARGE, CHRISTOPHER. *The Sudden Guest*
H-216 LA FARGE, OLIVER. *Laughing Boy*
Q-38 LAING, ALEXANDER. *The Sea Witch*
S-15 LAING, ALEXANDER. *Clipper Ship Men*
685 LAING, ALEXANDER, editor. *The Cadaver of Gideon Wyck*
F-175 LAMB, CHARLES. *The Essays*†
L-3 LAMOND, HENRY G. *Kilgour's Mare*
1120 LAMOND, HENRY G. *Dingo*
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J-278 LARDNER, RING. *You Know Me, Al*
782 LARDNER, RING. *You Know Me, Al* (Reprint)
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LATHAM, FRANK B., see CARLISLE, NORMAN V.
E-148 LAVENDER, DAVID. *One Man's West*
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1270 LAWRENCE, HILDA. *Death of a Doll*
899 LAWSON, ROBERT. *Mr. Wilmer*
1277 LAYTON, MARK. *Silver Spurs*
894 LEACH, MARGARET. *Reveille in Washington**
G-197 LEACOCK, STEPHEN. *Laugh with Leacock*
L-10 LEACOCK, STEPHEN. *Happy Stories Just to Laugh At*
976 LEACOCK, STEPHEN. *My Remarkable Uncle and Other Sketches**
1307 LEIGH, MICHAEL. *Comrade Forest*
LEIGHTON, ISABEL, see PERRY, GEORGE SESSIONS
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911 LEWIS, SINCLAIR. *Mantrap*
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LIEBER, LILLIAN R., see LIEBER, HUGH GRAY
F-153 LINCOLN, ABRAHAM. *Selected Writings*†
J-291 LINCOLN, VICTORIA. *February Hill*
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N-26 LINKLATER, ERIC. *Magnus Merriman*
1076 LINSCOTT, R. N., compiled by. *Comic Relief**
C-73 LIPPMANN, WALTER. *U.S. Foreign Policy*
H-239 LLEWELLYN, RICHARD. *How Green Was My Valley*
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LOCKRIDGE, RICHARD, see LOCKRIDGE, FRANCES
J-288 LOFTS, NORAH. *The Golden Fleece*
780 LOMAX, BLISS. *Horsethief Creek*
1022 LOMAX, BLISS. *Rusty Guns*
1288 LOMAX, BLISS. *Trail Dust*
F-180 LONDON, JACK. *The Sea-Wolf*
G-182 LONDON, JACK. *White Fang*
K-3 LONDON, JACK. *The Call of the Wild*

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712 MACDONALD, WILLIAM COLT. *The Three Mesquiteers*
956 MACDONALD, WILLIAM COLT. *Cartridge Carnival*
1208 MACDONALD, WILLIAM COLT. *Thunderbird Trail*
1304 MACDONALD, WILLIAM COLT. *Master of the Mesa*
H-223 MACDOUGALL, MICHAEL. *Danger in the Cards*
M-32 MACINNES, HELEN. *While Still We Live*
932 MACLENNAN, HUGH. *Two Solitudes*
1034 MCCLOY, HELEN. *Panic*
MCCULLEY, JOHNSTON, see COBURN, WALT
M-12 MCDONALD, ANGUS. *Old McDonald Had a Farm*
F-178 MCFEE, WILLIAM. *Casuals of the Sea*
765 MCFEE, WILLIAM. *World's Great Tales of the Sea**
1255 MCGERR, PAT. *Pick Your Victim*
788 MCKENNA, EDWARD L. *The Bruiser*
695 MCKENNEY, RUTH. *The McKenneys Carry On*
1308 MCLAUGHLIN, ROBERT. *The Side of the Angels*
H-226 MCMEEKIN, CLARK. *Red Raskall*
M-27 MCMEEKIN, CLARK. *Show Me a Land*

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1180 McNulty, John. *Third Avenue, New York*

B-51 Macardle, Dorothy. *The Uninvited*
1185 Macardle, Dorothy. *The Unforeseen*
978 Macauley, C. B. F. *The Helicopters Are Coming*
940 Machen, Arthur. *The Great God Pan and Other Weird Stories*†
936 Madden, Joe ("The Markee"). *Set 'Em Up*
A-20 Maisel, Albert Q. *Miracles of Military Medicine*
1159 Maloney, Russell. *It's Still Maloney*
733 Maltz, Albert. *The Cross and the Arrow*
1044 Manchester, Harland. *New World of Machines*
947 Mann, E. B. *Comanche Kid*
L-28 Mann, Thomas. *Selected Short Stories*†
I-252 Mansfield, Katherine. *Selected Short Stories*†
T-25 Mantle, Burns, editor. *The Best Plays of 1943–1944**
1272 Manus, Max. *9 Lives before Thirty*
775 March, William. *Some Like Them Short**
1223 Margolies, Joseph A., editor. *Strange and Fantastic Stories**
F-166 Markham, Beryl. *West with the Night*
R-9 Marmur, Jacland. *Sea Duty*
D-120 Marquand, John P. *So Little Time*
E-146 Marquand, John P. *The Late George Apley*
G-208 Marquand, John P. *H. M. Pulham, Esq.*
L-26 Marquand, John P. *Wickford Point*
852 Marquand, John P. *Wickford Point* (Reprint)
1084 Marquand, John P. *Repent in Haste*
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1269 MARSH, NGAIO. *Final Curtain*
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1227 MARTIN, RALPH G. *Boy from Nebraska*
820 MASEFIELD, JOHN. *Selected Poems*†
D-119 MASON, F. VAN WYCK. *Rivers of Glory*
M-31 MASON, F. VAN WYCK. *Stars on the Sea**
1234 MASON, VAN WYCK. *Saigon Singer*
E-128 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET. *The Moon and Sixpence*
I-260 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET. *Ashenden*
L-30 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET. *Of Human Bondage**
N-14 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET. *The Summing Up*
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MAUPASSANT, GUY DE, see DE MAUPASSANT, GUY
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919 MAXWELL, WILLIAM. *The Folded Leaf*
C-79 MEIER, FRANK. *Fathoms Below*
MELICK, WELDON, see STONE, EZRA
A-24 MELVILLE, HERMAN. *Typee*
G-209 MELVILLE, HERMAN. *Moby Dick**
L-15 MELVILLE, HERMAN. *Omoo**
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F-159 MENCKEN, H. L. *Happy Days*
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D-108 MITCHELL, JOSEPH. *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*
J-287 MOREHOUSE, WARD. *George M. Cohan*
R-25 MORLEY, CHRISTOPHER. *Kitty Foyle*
C-72 MULFORD, CLARENCE E. *Hopalong Cassidy Serves a Writ*
F-163 MULFORD, CLARENCE E. *The Bar 20 Rides Again*
H-227 MULFORD, CLARENCE E. *Corson of the JC*
I-257 MULFORD, CLARENCE E. *Hopalong Cassidy's Protégé*
759 MULFORD, CLARENCE E. *Buck Peters, Ranchman*
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918 MULFORD, CLARENCE E. *"Tex"*
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MUNRO, H. H., see "SAKI" (pseud.)
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1285 MYERS, JOHN MYERS. *The Wild Yazoo*

NAFZIGER, RAY, see FOSTER, BENNETT
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H-238 NORDHOFF, CHARLES, and JAMES NORMAN HALL. *Botany Bay*
T-10 NORDHOFF, CHARLES, and JAMES NORMAN HALL. *Men against the Sea*
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NUGENT, ELLIOTT, see HELLMAN, LILLIAN
C-66 NYE, NELSON C. *Pistols for Hire*
O-10 NYE, NELSON C. *Wild Horse Shorty*
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G-204 O'HARA, MARY. *Thunderhead*
1211 O'HARA, MARY. *Green Grass of Wyoming*
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684 O'NEILL, JOHN J. *Prodigal Genius*
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	PAPASHVILY, HELEN, see PAPASHVILY, GEORGE
R-4	PARKER, DOROTHY. *Selected Short Stories*†
1135	PARKHILL, FORBES. *Troopers West*
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1004	PARTRIDGE, BELLAMY. *January Thaw*
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872	PERELMAN, S. J. *Crazy like a Fox*
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L-16	PERRY, GEORGE SESSIONS. *Hackberry Cavalier*
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767 POE, EDGAR ALLAN. *Selected Stories*† (Reprint)
R-21 PORTER, KATHERINE ANNE. *Selected Short Stories*†
PORTER, WILLIAM SYDNEY, see HENRY, O. (pseud.)
988 POWELL, RICHARD. *Lay That Pistol Down*
831 POWERS, TOM. *Virgin with Butterflies*
A-7 PRATT, THEODORE. *Mr. Winkle Goes to War*
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793 PRATT, THEODORE. *The Barefoot Mailman*
1029 PRICE, GEORGE. *Is It Anyone We Know?*
C-75 PRIESTLEY, J. B. *Black-Out in Gretley*
665 PRIESTLEY, J. B. *The Old Dark House*
PRIZEWINNERS IN SPECIAL SERVICES ART CONTEST, see *Soldier Art*
810 PROCHNOW, HERBERT V. *Great Stories from Great Lives**
764 PROKOSCH, FREDERICK. *The Asiatics*
F-170 PYLE, ERNIE. *Here Is Your War*
P-30 PYLE, ERNIE. *Brave Men*†
1179 PYLE, ERNIE. *Last Chapter*
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680 QUEEN, ELLERY. *Calamity Town*
T-17 QUENTIN, PATRICK. *Puzzle for Puppets*
1291 QUENTIN, PATRICK. *Puzzle for Pilgrims*
C-84 QUICK, HERBERT. *The Hawkeye*

F-160 RAINE, WILLIAM MACLEOD. *Border Breed*
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RANGER, SETH, see COBURN, WALT, and FOSTER, BENNETT
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M-5 REPPLIER, AGNES. *Père Marquette**
REYNOLDS, Q. J., see PERELMAN, S. J.
G-190 RHODES, EUGENE MANLOVE. *The Trusty Knaves*
H-212 RHODES, EUGENE MANLOVE. *Beyond the Desert*
J-271 RHODES, EUGENE MANLOVE. *The Proud Sheriff*
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RIGBY, ELIZABETH, see RIGBY, DOUGLAS

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ROSTEN, LEO, see ROSS, LEONARD Q. (pseud.)

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SAINT-EXUPÉRY, ANTOINE DE, see DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY, ANTOINE

H-211 ST. GEORGE, CPL. THOMAS R. *C/O Postmaster*

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P-28 SANDOZ, MARI. *Slogum House*
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790 SEARS, PAUL B. *This Is Our World*
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732 SELBY, JOHN. *Starbuck* (Reprint)
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SHAW, C. K., see FOSTER, BENNETT
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D-111 SHEARING, JOSEPH. *Blanche Fury*
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SHEPHARD, WILLARD, see SHEPARD, ODELL
G-195 SHORT, LUKE. *Raiders of the Rimrock*
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S-29 SNOW, EDGAR. *People on Our Side*
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662 SOUSA, JOHN P., III. *My Family, Right or Wrong*
K-32 SPALDING, ALBERT. *Rise to Follow*
D-92 SPALDING, CHARLES, and OTIS CARNEY. *Love at First Flight*
E-125 SPEARMAN, FRANK. *The Mountain Divide*
H-232 SPEARMAN, FRANK. *Carmen of the Rancho*
O-25 SPEARMAN, FRANK. *Selwood of Sleepy Cat*
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R-1 STERN, G. B. *The Ugly Dachshund*
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885 STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories*†
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