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*Dedicated to the Positive Promotion of our Military Heroes - Both Foreign and Domestic
Semi Retired and Loving It!!!!*

My Bookplate Signatures

The Rotary Four Way Test

- Is it the truth?
- Is it fair to all concerned
- Will it build goodwill and better friendships
- Will it be beneficial to all concerned

The idea for the unusual bookplate signatures came from Dr. Colin Heaton. Heaton is an author and professor of military history. For over 30 years he has been interviewing WWII military heroes - both Allied and Axis.

When Colin interviewed a subject he would have him sign several sheets with multiple signatures on each sheet. He would then cut the signatures apart and affix them to either books he had written or to limited edition copies of his unedited interviews. A few years ago I acquired all of Colin's remaining signed photos, books, and bookplate signatures.

Several years ago I started getting subjects to sign sheets like the one on the reverse of this note. The difference between Colin's and mine is that Colin would use whatever paper he might have handy and many of the sigs were very small and close together on the sheet. Also, most of Colin's are German and most of mine are Allied.

I use a 100% rag content paper for my sheets and have the sheets ruled for the subject to sign within a 1.5" x 3.5" box. Depending upon the subject I will have them sign between one and ten sheets of 12 signatures on each sheet.

I negotiate a price with the subject for the sigs and depending upon their preference, I will make the payment payable to them personally or a non-profit organization of their choice. In either case, I send the payment to them. Many of these subjects have no problem being compensated for their signatures but others would not consider taking payment for their autographs. In my case, I will not sell anything that the subject signed for me without my paying him for it without their approval.

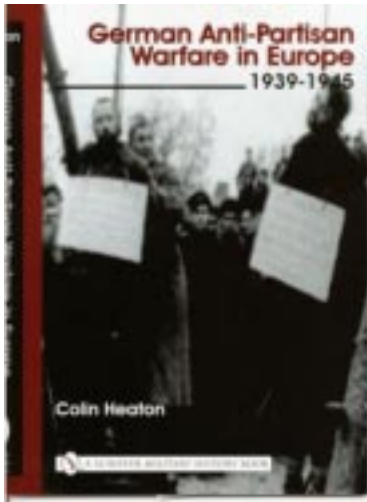
I get many of my bookplate sigs at militaria shows, air shows, reunions, etc. Others I will contact the subject by mail or phone and we work out the arrangements that way.

I use my bookplate sigs to affix to the title page of books the subject either wrote or was featured in, on 3x5 or 3.5x5.5 descriptive signature cards, and to affix to unsigned photos. I had partnered with an outstanding artist, Stephen Weeks, and we did signed & numbered limited edition prints with the subject's signature on the mat, but he was killed in an unfortunate auto train accident. Stephen was actually a world class fantasy artist, but we both had an interest in WWII, so he had started doing a little of this type of art when he was killed.

Cy Stapleton

About Autographs

It is not uncommon for potential customers to question the authenticity of the signatures I use on my album pages. I have no problem of any kind with that because there are so many forgeries offered - sometimes intentionally and sometimes by unknowledgeable sellers. While some of my signatures do come from wholesale dealers, the vast majority of the WWII and later were acquired by me personally, by a friend, or my German partner. Mine I pick up at reunions, conventions and by mail. I prefer small signed photos or "bookplates" for my album pages. We also purchase collections from estate sales but rarely at auctions.



Interestingly, a well-known sports autograph dealer questioned the authenticity of my military autographs, saying that no collector in his right mind would collect sheets of signatures. Little did he know that his comment was made having only a part of the info and having no idea the intended use of the sheets of autographs and their value.

The pictures above show how many of the bookplate signatures I use on my album pages were originally intended to be used. Many came from a friend who is a professor of military history, author and historian who has been interviewing military heroes from around the world for over 35- years. In addition, he has been attending annual reunions of these heroes in both Europe and the United States. During these interviews and at these reunions he has these heroes sign sheets of "bookplates," which he cuts apart and affixes in "limited edition" copies of his books and interviews. There are 18-25 or so sigs on a sheet. He would also take 25-50 postcard size photos for them to sign. While he was personal friends with many of these subjects he never got the chance to meet some of them. As an example, a planned meeting with Rudel at one of the Luftwaffe reunions was not possible because Rudel was ill. However, a friend of Rudel got a number of bookplates and signed photos of Rudel for him. As it turned out, Rudel died before the interview took place. On a couple of occasions, subjects and widows of subjects made their husband's collections of signed photos available to him. Walter Krupinski gave him not only his collection of signed photos, but also some of his medals. Most of these subjects are now long deceased and their signatures are becoming quite scarce. Several years ago I acquired all of his bookplate signatures and signed photos with the exception of a few he held back to use in an upcoming book. The picture below, left is what an uncut sheet of the bookplates looks like.

Most of these sheets have only the signatures of the individual. A few have a several different hero signatures. Still others are single sigs on a small piece of mat board. Those are mats the subjects signed for limited edition prints and the mat was damaged or were signed on pieces of the mat. When I go to various events, I attempt to get a few sheets of bookplate signatures and a few photos signed. I also get some by mail. I either pay the subject for these signatures or make a donation to the organization of his choice.

I use these signatures in my album pages and in copies of the hero's books. I have numerous unsigned copies of books these heroes have written. I will affix one of the author's or subject's bookplates or signed photos to the title page of the book. I find them most useful in affixing to Allied WWII heroes' pictures. As noted elsewhere, while collecting autographed photos in WWII Germany was a huge endeavour, most of the Allied signed items are 3x5 cards. I am able to affix a bookplate to a photo and have a signed photo.

In addition to the bookplates, I have also acquired Dr. Heaton's numerous signed and multi-signed books and letters from these subjects. Often those letters have content I can use in my album pages. Those letters go far to quell any fears my customers may have as to the authenticity of my signatures. In my personal collection, I have some 150 letters I have received from Medal of Honor, Victoria Cross and Knights Cross recipients. Finally, I have a partner in Germany. He acquires large and small collections of signed photos from estate sales in Germany. I create album pages of these in both English and German.

One very important thing to consider is that items that are a hand-signed typewritten notes are valued at 2-3 times that of the signature. Those with handwritten notes or photos are valued at 4-10 times the value of a signature. The longer the handwritten document and the better the content, the higher the value. Wartime signed photos and documents have yet a higher value.

REMOVING BOOKPLATE SIGS

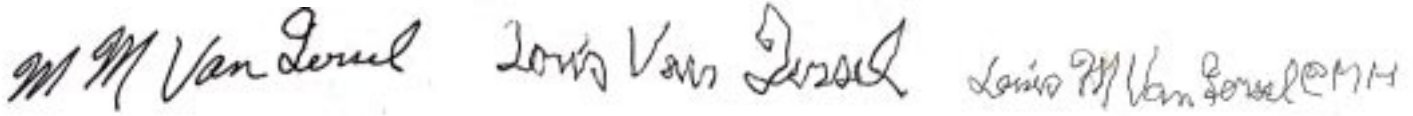
I do not recommend removing the bookplate sigs from the 3x5 descriptive cards or album pages. While I use a removable wax or rubber adhesive on all photos and documents, on the bookplate sigs I use a stronger adhesive. If you must remove the sig, hold one end of the sig and slowly and carefully peel it off the backing. Then rub any remaining adhesive off the back with a finger. Or, you can cut it off the backing.



C.D. "Cy" Stapleton

Signature Variants

It is interesting to note the difference in signatures as the individual ages or conditions change. Below is a dramatic example of Medal of Honor Recipient, Ludovicus M.M. VanIersel. The first dates from 1961. The 2nd dates from about 1980. The third dates from 1985, two years before his death. He was 91 when he signed the one on the right.

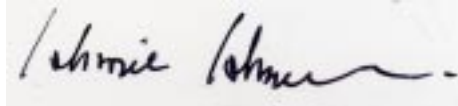


M M Van Iersel Louis Van Iersel Louis M Van Iersel @MM

Johnnie Johnson was UK's top WWII ace. Note the dramatic difference in his signatures between 1943 and 1996.



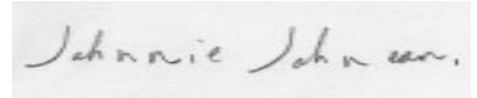
1943 - Official combat report



Mid 1970's - Signed photo obtained during a personal interview

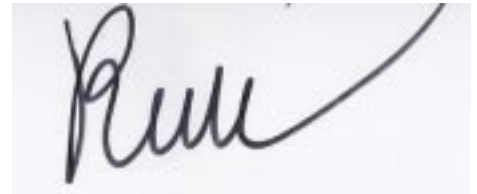
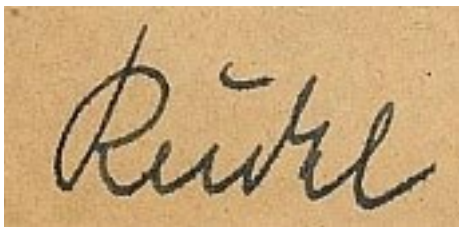


Late 1980's - Obtained at an air show

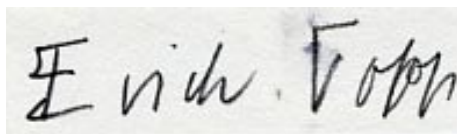
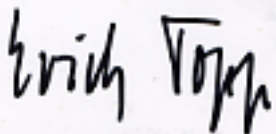


1996 - Obtained at a reunion

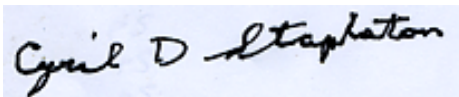
Hans Ulrich Rudel normally only signed his last name - as is pictured on the left which came from a war signed Hitler Youth Card. The center sig was obtained in the late 1970's and he signed his full name. The one on the right is a post-stroke sig I believe was obtained a few months prior to his death. Because it was so difficult for him to write after his stroke, there are many variants of his post-stroke autograph. I have several letters from him and all but one are signed with his last name only.



Erich Topp was WWII Germany's third most successful Uboat commander. I have three variants of his sig. The one on the left is from one of several photos he sent me by mail when we exchanged our Rotary Club flags. The middle one is a bookplate obtained by Dr. Colin Heaton when he interviewed Topp. The one on the right is from a sheet of bookplate sigs he sent me in 2003.



My personal signatures. The first is from a military 3-day pass dating 1952. The middle one is from a 1970 era signature rubber stamp that I still occasionally use. The last one is current.



In my collection I have several Medal of Honor and one Knights Cross recipients autographs which were not actually signed by the recipient, but by their spouses or with a rubber stamp. As an example, when a recipient got too old and infirmed, it was not uncommon for them to either use a rubber stamp with their signature or have a loved one sign the item. I have also noticed that the signature differs substantially when the subject is signing fast or is in a hurry - like at a book signing or when stopped in public. Often rather than a "signature" is just a "scribble." Jack Eagle, who was Xerox's "Brother Dominic" was famous for this. Some autographs are signed with an "autopen." I do not believe I have any of these in my collection. The German sigs are the most unusual in my collection. Many are illegible. Others are totally different from one day to the next and occasionally some are near identical when signed 40 years apart. It's a real challenge.