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GEORGE HOYNINGEN-HUENE

PHOTOGRAPHER

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INTRODUCTION

George Hoyningen-Huene was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1900. His father, a Baltic nobleman, was head equerry in the service of Czar Nicholas II; his mother was the daughter of the United States Minister to Russia. Thus Mr. Hoyningen-Huene grew up surrounded by the brilliant, aristocratic life of St. Petersburg in the pre-revolutionary days.

During the revolution, he left Russia with his mother for England, where he joined the British Army as an interpreter and served in Southern Russia against the Central Communist forces.

With the victory of the Bolsheviks, Mr. Hoyningen-Huene went to Paris. There he was gradually drawn into the field of fashion illustration, first as an artist and then as a photographer. From 1930 to 1945 he was a top fashion photographer for Vogue, concentrating on the esthetic and technical problems in bringing a new feeling of life and realism into the stereotyped, unnatural poses still common at the time. He of course knew, and was associated with, many of the outstanding artists and designers of post-World War I Paris.

Eventually Mr. Hoyningen-Huene came to New York with Harper's Bazaar. After World War II, he left fashion

photography and began to travel extensively doing photographic studies of many areas, among them Mexico, Greece and Africa. He has taught photography at the Art Center School in Los Angeles, and is currently a motion picture color coordinator, having worked with such directors as George Cukor and Jean Negulesco on films both here and in Europe.

The interviews were conducted at Mr. Hoyningen-Huene's home in Los Angeles by Mrs. Elizabeth I. Dixon in April, 1965. The manuscript was edited and indexed by Mrs. Adelaide Tusler.

I was born in St. Petersburg, Russia. St. Petersburg is now called Leningrad. This was in 1900.

My father was a Baltic nobleman and he was quite a rider, a gentlemen rider; he won very many races, and was sort of a . . .you may call it a "glamour boy" of his time. He was in the service of the Czar. He was in the Chevalier Guard Regiment, and he remained in the service of the Czar as head equerry, which meant purchasing all the horses for the Imperial stables.

My mother was Ann Van Ness Lothrop from Grosse Pointe, Michigan, the daughter of state Senator George Van Ness Lothrop, who became United States Minister [to Russia]. In those days we didn't have ambassadors in Russia. That is how my mother met my father. In those days, children were rather estranged from their parents, and most of their education was given over first to nurses and then to tutors. I remember seeing my mother on rare occasions-- she was extremely busy taking her daughters out to various balls and parties, and before they would go off to a ball they would come up and say good night to me. I was still a child and I was always amazed at the beautiful dresses they wore and the slight smell of eau de cologne and powder. In those days, dresses were very elaborate, and the transformation took quite a long time from day to evening.

I seldom saw my father. He was usually on his estate in Estonia, or he was traveling and buying horses for the Emperor. Our estate in Estonia was not very large. He was passionately devoted to improving housing conditions for the local peasants and digging irrigation canals, and, of course, whenever a horse of the Imperial stables wasn't absolutely perfect, the Emperor would let my father have it, so he had quite a large stable. I learned to ride at an early age, though they say that my father started riding when he was five.

I was very backward in school, and I disliked the climate of St. Petersburg. We had winter days where the sun hardly rose above the horizon and we never saw daylight. We had kerosene lamps; later electricity came into being, and the trolleys, which were horse-drawn, became electrically drawn, which was a great help because we didn't have to see the poor horses slipping on the ice and being whipped back into position.

St. Petersburg was a very curious city. It was I think the most aristocratic city in the world. There were very few stores; there was a big sort of store in the arcades which sold books and cheap clothes and hardware, and there was a delicatessen store I remember which was quite wonderful with Art Nouveau bronze fixtures in the shape of a huge arc of reeds. The ends of the reeds were tubular electric bulbs, and of course there were mountains

of fish and caviar and venison. Then there was another shop which was called Fleur De Nice, which imported flowers from the French Riviera by train every day. These flowers found their ways into the drawing rooms and boudoirs of St. Petersburg.

The most impressive sight of St. Petersburg was the line of palaces which faced the river, along the embankment. The embankment was of parquet, not polished, but paved in wood, and the little bridges which crossed the canals, which were offshoots from the delta of the river Neva, were paved in cobblestones. It was very curious to observe the difference of noise (in the winter, there were the horse-drawn sledges and in the summer, carriages, all of which were noiseless) on the wooden pavement--then there would be a slight clatter as they crossed these slight small bridges. Most of the palaces in St. Petersburg were on the waterfront, and the river was extremely wide. It must have been over a quarter of a mile. Across from the great palaces was the very grim fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, with a Baroque church and a needle of gold rising to the sky.

In the spring, the great phenomenon of the ice floe would start. There was a trolley crossing the river, and of course with the first sign of the ice melting the tracks were removed and stored for the next year. Then came this emptiness and sudden black lines crossing like

lightning over this expanse of whiteness, and then, with a terrific thunder, the ice would split and all these blocks of ice would crash against each other, framed by granite walls, with a thundering noise. This was a sort of "rite of spring." Then the Emperor would come down with the clergy and his suite and bless the waters.

In the summer, we used to spend a lot of time in Estonia, and my mother's relatives would come over and visit us. Sometimes we would go abroad, either to the French Riviera or Italy or Germany. Most of my mother's shopping had to be done in Berlin, as well as taking care of her children's teeth. There was no good dentist in St. Petersburg, but there was an excellent American dentist in Berlin, so we had to go to Berlin for that. My mother used to buy her clothes in Paris. Shopping was very limited in Russia.

As I have said, I was very backward in school. I hated the climate of St. Petersburg, and after having visited a German Lutheran school, I joined the Imperial Lyceum, which was a semi-military aristocratic school where the great Russian poet Pushkin had studied. The discipline was very severe.

By that time, World War I had broken out. Incidentally, my father and my mother entertained Count [Leopold von] Berchtold and his wife at our estate in Estonia. Count Berchtold was the Austrian minister of foreign affairs who

did everything he could to promote war. My family was very much criticized for that. It would be very much the same as if somebody here would entertain Mr. Ribbentrop before World War II, although there was no political implication there whatsoever. My father was extremely pessimistic about the outcome of World War I and always said that Russia had absolutely no reason to fight in that war; that she was sort of railroaded into it, and this is partly true. The country was not prepared for this tremendous effort.

Soon after, around the middle of World War I, my mother and I went to live in Yalta where she bought a small house giving out on the Black Sea. I studied at the gymnasium of Yalta. One day the news came that the Czar had abdicated. A few months prior to that, friends of ours whom we knew very well had conspired to murder Rasputin, the disgrace of Russia, and by that save the monarchy. But it was too late. My father always criticized Prince [Felix] Yussupov and said that although it was a very good thing that he did away with the charlatan monk, his action was in the tradition of the Borgias, to invite guests and poison them. The revolution came very suddenly and everybody was very much relieved that the Czar had abdicated and that there was going to be a change of the regime. This was universal. We were delighted at the news, because we thought that Russia could continue the war effort. But

by degrees things went from bad to worse. By that time, Russia tried another offensive but the armies collapsed.

My mother had visited the Dowager Empress who was a great friend of hers--as you know, the Dowager Empress was the sister of Queen Alexandra. She was Danish. Maria Feodorovna was staying in the palace in Livadia near Yalta in the Crimea. Soon after that our house was raided, and some Red sailors from Sevastopol naval base, arrested us and searched the house. They found in my mother's room under the bed a typewriter, and not knowing what it was they assumed that, as she had visited the Empress, she was probably a spy and the typewriter was a radio set to communicate across the Black Sea with the Sultan of Turkey!

However, this was a warning; and although my mother, being American, didn't quite realize what was happening in Russia, I, having been brought up by socialist students, saw that this was going to be a profound change--but it wasn't going the way the socialists wanted it to go. It was probably going to be a take-over by this very small but powerful party called the Bolsheviks, which we now call the Communists; and in that case, as their slogan was "Death to the Bourgeois," I didn't see any hope whatsoever in remaining in that country. I was too young to join the army; besides, the army had collapsed, and I persuaded my mother to do everything in her power to leave for England where we had some influential friends who

could arrange for our entry.

We went to St. Petersburg, which by that time was renamed Petrograd. My father was in Estonia, so my mother went to her friend, the American ambassador, who in turn obtained an exit permit for us from Kerensky. We could take very little with us. Everything that remained in St. Petersburg was lost.

We traveled over Finland to Sweden. I was in my school uniform. The first thing I had to do was to get out of it and buy a suit of clothes. Then we managed to go to Norway and wait for our final passage to England, which at that time was a dangerous passage as the submarine war was at its greatest height. This was in the late summer of 1917.

In England, I went to grammar school where I had to learn everything all over again.

After the Armistice of 1918 and the collapse of the Central Powers, there were several fronts which opened up in Russia against the Central Communist government. I thought I might be useful and joined up as a private soldier in the British Army. The British Army would not give foreigners officers' commissions, so I had to be a private; later on I became a sergeant. I was in the barracks in the Tower of London, of all places, which was rather colorful! I was given an arctic outfit and told that I was going to go to Archangel, where American troops

were fighting the reds. But, by some fluke, they put us on a ship and landed us in France. We boarded a train which took us three weeks to get to the tip of Italy (in spite of the arctic clothes), then to a camp in Salonika in Macedonia; and then afterwards, via Constantinople, to South Russia.

We were not a fighting force. We were a mission of instructors and I was an interpreter. As a matter of fact, I hardly spoke at all because everything I said was what someone else was telling somebody else, and I was interpreting it from one language to another.

We moved our headquarters from Ekaterinodar to Paganrog on the sea of Azov, and I remember one summer night in the sergeants' mess when the camp commandant came in very abruptly. He was very much upset by something, and he told us that a brigand by the name of Makhno gathered a force of about 30,000 men and had surrounded the city. Now, Makhno and his bands were maurading brigands who killed everybody they encountered. We were only 2,000 Britishers, and there were a certain number of Russian troops which were not too reliable.

So the next day we put on a show of force and paraded a few tanks around the city. By evening, after a lot of machinegun firing in the outskirts, Makhno's troops just disappeared into space. Nobody ever heard of them since. Very strange. It was like the times of Attila, when the

Huns would suddenly come up with great forces and then disappear into the vast plains of Southern Russia.

I always wanted to get to the front and see some action, and as winter came they sent me with several officers and a few other sergeants up to Tsaritsyn which was later renamed Stalingrad, (now Volgograd), where the great battle of Stalingrad took place in World War II. Tsaritsyn was on the Volga north of the Caspian Sea and on the border of the great Astrakhan steppes. Across the river were the Bolshevik lines commanded by Stalin, and when he took Tsaritsyn he named it Stalingrad in his honor.

Well, the worst enemy was spotted typhus fever, which is not like typhoid, but typhus, which is communicated by lice. There was no inoculation against it, and, as time went on, tens of thousands of people were lying dead in the streets and on the railway station platforms. You had to thread your way among these wretched people. The dead would be hauled onto trucks and their boots taken off, because the living needed boots. You always saw these dirty feet sticking out of the back of the trucks. It was sinister, like the later photographs of Buchenwald. This was frightfully depressing.

One day we were told that we had to evacuate in forty-eight hours, and the bombardment of Tsaritsyn started. General [Peter Nicolaievich] Wrangel was in command of the White Russian forces. General Wrangel had

married my sister's sister-in-law, and I had known him and Baroness Wrangel since my childhood. I saw him once on parade. Baroness Wrangel was a nurse and tending to the wounded. Finally we had to evacuate, my officers and myself. We all were contaminated and we could hardly move. It was just by a miracle that we got out of the place. There was a tremendous rush for trucks. We had horses which we had to load onto these cattle trucks, and we somehow managed, against a lot of Russian resistance and red tape and intrigue, to get out in the general scramble.

After that, there was one soldier who was not contaminated, but the rest of us were unconscious for ten days. We fortunately reached the headquarters of Taganrog just in time for the crisis. After you are washed and cleaned up you are not contagious any more. All your clothes have to be destroyed and all your possessions, whatever you have. I was then eighteen and was put into a ward, and my cot was next to the door because they decided that I was going to be the first one to kick the bucket. But somehow or other the next morning, my temperature fell and I felt better. The ward was like a madhouse of lunatics. All these men with very high temperatures were screaming and yelling--it was pathetic.

Three weeks later I asked to see a newspaper and I saw that the war was lost. That was a terrible disillusionment because the anti-Communist troops had almost reached

Moscow, and if we had had a little more help, we could have solved that problem and probably Russia would have become a social democratic state instead of a Communist state.

Now came the evacuation, and that brought on more panic, with everyone making for the trains in a terrible blizzard. I remember it was Christmas Eve and we were on our way to Novorossiysk, and a lot of refugees were up on the roofs of the trains and some of them wouldn't be able to hold on and would fall off as the train was progressing.

Then came Novorossiysk and Constantinople, and we hoped to get home. Unfortunately, there was a fire in Constantinople and a friend of mine managed to save me just in time as the lights went out, because five minutes later the whole hospital caved in. It was an old building. There were several casualties among friends of mine.

Finally we did reach England on a hospital ship, and I remember having been so undernourished that in Malta when I was looking out of the porthole of the ship and saw some boats down below with oranges, I tied all my underwear up with a string and let it down for four oranges. I could have been court martialed for it, but I couldn't resist the oranges.

In the meanwhile, my father had escaped from Russia, after having been bombed out of his estate by the Communists, and joined my mother in England, whereupon

they went to France and settled down on the French Riviera where the climate was more agreeable. That is where I joined them. I would have preferred it if my parents had gone to America because that was the country I always wanted to go to, being half American (now I'm entirely American).

But I went to Paris and joined the thousands and thousands of Russian refugees who really were not brought up to do any manual labor or had any particular profession. I took on odd jobs. I was sent to Poland as a lumber inspector for an American company which was buying railway ties for the Belgian government; I went as an interpreter and also as an inspector of railway ties. Something quite new.

Then I came back to Paris. As I had a tuxedo, I found that I could get jobs as an extra in motion pictures. So I would go and sit in a certain cafe where unit managers or assistant directors would come and recruit extras for the next day's shooting. The next day's shooting meant that you had to get up at five in the morning and take a trolley way out of town and then spend some time making up. I remember there were these arc lights without any glass protection, and we used to get klieg eyes. It was all a new adventure and a new world. But it did one thing for me--it taught me how to light people and sets. I was watching and observing all the time how they did it, and

I was fascinated by the motion picture medium and by photography.

In the meanwhile, my sister had opened a dressmaking establishment. She used to ask me to sketch the dresses for her catalog. Well, I had drawn very little in my childhood, but here I encountered a new field of activity. I would visit the Académie La Grande Chaumière and Colarrosís, where we could sketch from live nude models without any correction or instruction. It was a very practical institution. You had a room where you sketched five-minute poses, another room where you sketched ten-minute poses, and another room where you sketched thirty-minute poses. So you either trained your technique, or you trained your eye, or you trained your speed. That was, I think, a very beneficial institution for anyone who wants to draw without taking a course. Later on I did go to a cubist called André Lothe and studied with him, and my drawing improved.

I soon started making a living at fashion illustration. I would have to go to dance places and night clubs and to the races and remember clothes--I couldn't sketch all the time, I had to remember them. It is very curious how one can train one's memory if one wants to. I could remember over a hundred dresses in every detail, after about two hours' work. Then I would go home and start sketching. I had a method of neckline, sleeve, waist,

hem, buttons, pockets, and all that.

But my drawings still were not good. I kept on, and finally I did some sketches of groups of people. I took them to an American buyer and I very hesitatingly said that I wanted a certain amount for this sketch. I thought if it came through it would be the most wonderful thing in the world! He looked at it for awhile and then he said, "Yes, I'd like ten like this." You could have knocked me over with a feather!

Well, that was the beginning. Then I started working for Marjorie Howard who was the sister of Kathleen Howard, the opera singer. Marjorie was the editor of Harper's Bazaar in those days. She gave me my first job of illustrating for that magazine.

Then Vogue came around and made me an offer which at that time was quite wonderful (I was 25 years old). Among my duties was to prepare and design backgrounds for photographers. There was Man Ray, and there was an English photographer and several other men, and they were all being tried out for Vogue. Their final choice was a young American photographer who showed a lot of talent but who was rather erratic. One day he didn't turn up. There was the set and the model was ready, and there was an assistant who did darkroom work. I called the office and they said, well, just shoot it. So I took the picture. From that day on I was Vogue's Paris photographer. The

picture came out full-page.

This was just a start, and a whole new world opened up. My problems were to try and make women look as they did in real life. You see, snapshots were practically unpublishable in those days. Film was very slow and grainy, and every time you enlarged a small-sized picture it didn't look professional. The result was that women had to pose to large 8 x 10 cameras, and since the manipulating of those cameras is very slow, they all looked as though they were posing for their portraits. I tried to free myself from the shackles of these technical difficulties and bring some kind of feeling of life into fashion photography. You see, the illustrators were doing drawings of women in action and in their habitat, or their surroundings, and they looked convincing. But the photographs always looked static and conventionally dull. I tried to group several people together, and still they looked like wax figures in wax-work museums.

I spent several years experimenting. There was, of course, the work that always had to be done, and Vogue starting publishing my photographs regularly. Then I came to the conclusion that the more I added to a photograph, the more cluttered it became, and the only way out was simplicity. I tried to capture the transition from one movement to another movement in a static pose; and also to capture the inner charm and femininity of women, plus

the fact that the model would have to understand how the gown moved and how she would behave in that particular dress so that it didn't look as if she just put it on for a photograph but was part and parcel of it, that the dress really actually belonged to her. I gave up my entire life to these problems, and it took me years and years and years.

I was pretty good by 1929. [Edward] Steichen came over, and he was extremely patient and kind. He allowed me to watch him work, and his moral support was more than any technical knowledge that I could have had at that time. He was really great, and he was of tremendous help. From then on, I suppose I can say that I became the best fashion photographer between 1930 and 1945.

Condé Nast brought me over to New York in '29. I didn't like the speakeasy days in New York particularly, but I always wanted to come back, and so I did come back. Finally, when I changed over from Vogue to Harper's Bazaar, I came permanently to the United States, and my residence was in New York.

After World War II, I decided that I'd done enough of fashion photography and I wanted a change. In the meanwhile, I'd done some semi-archeological books. I did one on Greece and one on the temples in Syria and one on Egypt. I'd traveled a lot in Africa, and I wrote a travel book on my trip in Africa, which was very exciting and interesting. I went to Mexico and worked on a book which

came out called Mexican Heritage.

Then I came to Los Angeles and started teaching at Art Center School. There were several changes which I introduced into the teaching course, fundamental and basic changes, which did not interfere with the courses of other instructors. I noticed for one thing that the students at this very excellent school were mostly concerned with technique, which was very well instructed and where the kids really had to turn out flawless negatives and very fine prints. What was lacking was, in the first place, the experience of handling people and, secondly, the freeing of a beginner from the technical restrictions and inhibitions created by these restrictions. That is to say, the boys would be primarily interested in getting the exact exposure and meter reading, and all this would take a long time while the models froze.

So to break them of this preoccupation I decided that we would make some projects by which the kids would momentarily forget technique. They wouldn't have time for all the paraphernalia. I wanted them to do a lot of research, so we embarked on a very alien scheme which to them was exotic. I suggested five scenes from Prosper Mérimée's book The Loves of Carmen. Now, this happens in a foreign country and it also takes place in a different century. They had to find locations which they pointed out to me and which I looked over and then they had to go

to Western Costumes and find the right costumes, from research mostly supplied by Gustave Doré's famous illustrations of Carmen. There were several sequences, and we decided we would make up photographic storyboards. Instead of storyboards being made by sketch artists, we would use students and people connected with the school as extras, and some models, and dress them up, and have many photographer-students photograph the action as it moved along. This was limited in time, and they had to work at a top rate of speed, and didn't have time to think too much about light meters and exposures.

For instance, we went to a place called Vasquez Rocks, which is not far from the Mojave Desert, a ranch where a lot of western pictures are shot. It's rather striking, the formation of the rocks. We photographed a scene where Carmen and Don José are involved in smuggling merchandise across the Sierras and are intercepted by the Spanish mounted police. During the skirmish, one of the men gets wounded and Carmen's husband shoots his head to pieces so that he is unrecognizable and so that there can't be any identification linking the shot man with the rest of the band. Well, this we planned to do in one day. What we did when we went out there was give each character a label. For instance, when we needed a mule, one boy would put his hands on the other fellow's shoulders and that was a mule. We did these storyboards without any expense. We

did it about three or four times, and then selected exactly what we wanted, and decided which way we were going to do it. We did the whole sequence in one day. We started at six in the morning and we were there at seven-thirty and we started shooting at eight and finished at six-thirty or seven in the evening. Then, of course the school made a show of these.

There were many other scenes that were shot. Very often, I would shoot a sequence as a demonstration of lighting and the kids would work as assistants. Not all of them would become photographers. Some of them would become photographers' assistants.

We did another problem which was much more difficult and much more ticklish. It was a storyboard of Oscar Wilde's Salomé done in the manner of Aubrey Beardsley, all black and white. We designed the sets, which were in miniature, and we had to calculate our montages so that the figures we were photographing would coincide with the scale of the set, quite an intricate calculation. There was a very charming Russian lady here who is a designer called Genia, and she contributed the costume which we adapted from Aubrey Beardsley's drawings. I shot that project myself as a demonstration. We had to shoot most of it out of sequence because the upper part of the set was against the black moonlit sky and the lower part of the set was all white. We had to have a black backing

for everything that was shot on top and a white backing for everything that was shot down below. Once the backing was painted, it was painted. It was too big to be moved around.

Another project was to make photographic interpretations of realistic or semirealistic painters--let's say some of the Dutch painters like Vermeer or Rembrandt, or Velasquez, for instance, the great Spanish painter. I asked the students to make modern versions of these paintings. They could choose any painting they wanted. They had to represent a man or a woman of today but in the manner of the painting. Some of the boys had never heard of these artists and they were fascinated by the research they had to go through. They were very eager to continue and do more. That was all very stimulating.

I also said that to train the eye, a good photographer should be able to draw, whereupon that was received with great doubt and misgiving. I said, "Look--if you go into the office of an art director and you are not likely to explain a picture you are planning to do, make a thumbnail sketch of it, but it has to be done in a few minutes with a few strokes of the pencil, and it has to look professional." So they had to make drawings before they did the photograph, and that helped too.

Then we did another thing: that was, bringing the photographers together with the art students. The art

students were to act as art directors and the photographers were to act as photographers. Now, I would tell the art directors, "You can ask anything you like and see that it's done your way." And I would tell the photography students, "If the art directors demand things that are really impossible or not practical, then do it their way and then do it your way too." The result was that these two groups were completely alien to each other, and of course the art students despised the photographers, which brought about interesting results.

This led up to a dummy magazine which I think was called Pacific, in which we had stories, personalities, fashion, illustration of stories by the art students, and advertising, a combination of art work and photography, advertising with photography and also advertising by the art students. It was a magazine like Holiday--let's say, Esquire and Holiday combined. Mostly personalities.

For instance, I got two students to do the story of juvenile delinquency. I said I would like to have it done in several chapters. The first chapter would be the climate and origin of crime. The second would be the actual crime. The third would be the punishment, and the fourth would be the remedy, how to prevent crime. Well, I introduced them to the authorities. There was one judge who absolutely refused to pose, and I told the students to get another judge somewhere else. Finally they did get a judge, and

they produced a wonderful story. These two boys were traveling around in police cars at night and shooting their stills like a documentary film. After about two or three months, they came up with a remarkable story, which went all over the nation in all the schools. It was a fine show.

I found it very difficult to teach large classes because a lot of people were not particularly interested, and I would rather concentrate on the ones who were enthusiastic and really showed promise.

Lucien Vogel came from a family of publishers and editors. He published probably the most imaginative fashion magazine ever produced. It was a limited edition and it had very beautiful plates done by avant-garde (in those days) artists and designers like [Georges] Lepape and [André] Marty and [Charles] Martin and [Bernard] Boutet de Monvel and Thayat and several others. These were reproduced in the equivalent of what is today silk screen, but they specialized in France in doing stencils, and all the color reproductions were done on the most expensive water-color paper. They used stencils for the various colors.

Vogel became editor of French Vogue and was instrumental in getting Condé Nast, who was the owner of Condé Nast Publications, interested in a new type of fashion artists. Those were the fashion artists which Vogel had produced in his Gazette du Bon Ton. Nast was

readily persuaded to start this revolutionary change, which in those days in America was quite a sensational change. The result was that, from rather ordinary, stodgy, old-maidish fashion illustrations, it became very dynamic and vital and very fascinating to the public. I believe it cost Condé Nast quite a lot of money to do this change-over, because every change in magazines alienates a certain number of readers who are traditionally formed in their habits. But it proved to be a very great success.

Later on, Lucien Vogel left the Condé Nast Publications and started a weekly called Vu which was really like the weekly rotogravure supplements in the German papers. They were not like our rotogravure supplements such as, for instance, the New York Times used to have. They were bound and they were about the size of Life magazine. There was a Frankfurter Illustrierte and a Berliner Illustrierte, a Münchener Illustrierte, and they all had their illustrated supplement. Now, Vu was not a supplement to any magazine, it was a weekly done in rotogravure. Henry Luce admitted that he was so impressed that he really started Life inspired by Vu, except that, of course, Life was printed on coated paper, had color and was a much higher-class magazine, more expensive than Vu.

Vogel tried another experiment which in publishing was very interesting. He got out a weekly newspaper in which he played up the most important problems and questions

of the day as seen by various controversial papers. This paper did not publish any thing of its own. It was everything that the world press said about this or that thing, for instance, the war in Manchuria, what the Japanese said, what the Chinese said, what the Americans said, what the French said. Or, for instance, controversial subjects in the French press, pro and con, or the Spanish Civil War. Well, it proved to be a complete failure, and, as he told me later, people want to read what they like to read, their point of view, and therefore they did not want to see the controversial side, except for a few people, intellectuals, who wanted to see both sides of the question.

Nevertheless, Vogel, in the publishing world, had a very important place as an innovator. His brother-in-law, Michel de Brunhoff, was the son of a man who published the programs of the Folies Bergères, and his grandfather published Bibles. Quite a contrast!

Talking of the world of fashion, I remember first meeting Mlle. Chanel, or Coco as her friends called her, way back in the early '20's. A very great friend of hers was a decorator and illustrator called [A.] Drian. I'm going to digress for a moment and tell about Drian, who met Gaby Delys, and she brought him some feathers and said, "Won't you design a headdress for this revue?" And he said, "Well, this is nothing at all. Why don't you get yourself ten times as many!" The result was an enormous

cloud of ostrich feathers which since then most revue stars of that type have been wearing.

Well, Drian told me that when he first met Chanel she hardly ever spoke. She was very observant. Not particularly good-looking. Slightly shy. Years later she was a torrent of conversation, brilliant but never ceasing. She saved all that energy up and finally expressed her opinion. At a time when ladies wore corsets and complicated gowns, Chanel happened to find a striped T-shirt, the sort the French sailors wore. Her sister had a friend who was a French sailor and Chanel found this very amusing, made herself a pleated skirt, and put on the sailor's T-shirt. On top of that she wore a lot of pearls. With that, she went to the races in Deauville and a new fashion was born. In one way or another every woman today including yourself is dressed by Chanel. In time all other women became old-fashioned and dowdy-looking. The other dressmakers immediately jumped on the bandwagon and, as I say, a new fashion was born, the fashion of the early '20's, right after World War I. I think she had certainly more to do with the change in women's clothes than anyone before or after. I think Isadora Duncan had great influence in doing away with corsets and freeing the body from all these stylized convolutions.

Chanel was extremely inventive. She launched the jersey fabric, she invented the beaded dresses. She

invented fringe dresses. She elaborated on this very simple silhouette, straight up and down as it was in those days with the waist rather low, and as time progressed she modified her clothes but she remained very conservative, very simple, and of top quality. I think she certainly ranks as one of the greatest dressmakers of our period, along with [Cristobal] Balenciaga, who is very different, who is also of today, but Balenciaga is a Spaniard who has austere and perfect taste and specializes in clothes for the more mature woman.

Then there was Mme. Alix, a woman who had a great gift of draping clothes in the manner of Greek sculpture, classical, and regal; she was a purist. I believe that the house continues under the name of Gres today.

Chanel was surrounded by brilliant people, among them Christian Bérard, who became the greatest scenic designer in France and who started out by designing ballets, and then went in for designing scenery and costumes for the great French classical plays of Molière and Racine at the Comédie Française. I remember seeing some of his ballets, the Seventh Symphony, the Fantastic Symphony, Mozartiana, and a Chabrier ballet which was called Cotillon. His colors were superb, fresh and vital. He then went into fashion illustration because he needed the money, which spoiled him, in a sense, because he was an extremely talented painter. We have very few paintings of his today,

mainly because he concentrated on fashion design and on scenery.

Then, there was Tchelitchev who was in a way his rival. Tchelitchev was a far greater painter, more inventive and with a deeper perception. Tchelitchev was born in Russia, fled the revolution, and started doing theatre design in Berlin. He then came to Paris and did some productions. One of the most beautiful ballets I've ever seen was done with nothing but lights played onto a backing and wings of white muslin. The people were dressed in white and red, like acrobats, and the girl, who was Tilly Losch, was dressed in an evening gown with a tremendous train of bottle-green satin which was sensational against that simple background. He also did Ondine for [Louis] Jouvet, where he used scrims and scenery painted on muslin with a transparent paint so that he could play lights from behind the scenery and from the front and change the aspect continuously. I think he told me that he used fifteen hundred electric bulbs on one set alone. The manipulation had to be rehearsed with great care to achieve the effects needed. Unfortunately, both of these very talented men are not alive any more.

Among the most dynamic and extraordinary people in Paris in those days was Jean Cocteau, who had great influence on the younger generation in France. He was a brilliant raconteur. It was a great pleasure to go to his

apartment on an afternoon and hear him talk. He also was a very great friend of Chanel's. Both Cocteau and Dali produced some avant-garde motion pictures, which are still being shown in movie libraries--I know the Museum of Modern Art in New York has copies of their pictures.

I remember Dali visiting me one day--I was living in Paris on the seventh floor, and he had never taken an elevator. This was in the early '30's. He walked up the stairs because he was rather scared of taking the elevator. I think since then he has changed a lot.

Well, coming back to Lucien Vogel. Vogel had made several books on Moorish architecture in Morocco, and he was a friend of the great French proconsul Marshal Lyautey, who really made Morocco what it was to be generations later. He was, in a sense, like a Roman proconsul, and of course colonialism in those days was not frowned upon. But Lyautey retained the integrity of the great Arab settlements in Morocco and would not allow any Europeans to settle down in the cities and build European homes. They had to be built outside a determined perimeter and so the cities were preserved intact, not as in many other countries like Tunisia and Algeria where the French made a mishmash of everything. Lyautey maintained the purity of Moroccan architecture. He was a very great esthete.

I remember asking the marshall to pose, long after he had retired, asking him to don his beautiful Moroccan

uniform which consisted of a French uniform with a great big burnous over it. He said, "Do you want me to put on fancy dress? No, sir." So I never had the honor to take his picture.

Visiting North Africa, I met André Gide on several occasions, and I must say that Gide spoke the most beautiful French I've ever heard. He was a rather dour man. Austere and uncommunicative. But when he did speak, he was brilliant and intelligent, and his French was beautiful. I've never heard such beautiful French spoken, unless it was on the stage.

I remember dining with an English friend of mine who was very fond of dogs. This lady had a house in Tunisia, and during dinner André Gide gave the dog a chicken bone, whereupon my hostess was horrified and said, "Please don't give him a chicken bone."

He said, "It's perfectly all right," and he continued to give the dog the chicken bones. I must say, my hostess almost died, because she adored his dog. Fortunately nothing happened. But it was a curious sort of arrogance of the man to say, well, it doesn't matter really. It certainly mattered to the hostess, whether the dog was alive, or whether its entrails were punctured by a chicken bone.

My first visit to Greece, and particularly to the Acropolis of Athens, was one of the greatest esthetic

experiences I've ever had. When I first saw the Parthenon I was so overwhelmed that I didn't even dare to make a photograph; but I did return the next year, being haunted by the poetic beauty of Greece, and I started working on a project of a book, which subsequently came out under the name of Hellas, a Tribute to Classical Greece. I used to go to the Acropolis every morning and late in the afternoon and get all my morning shots and afternoon shots--I took hundreds of pictures and made selections of them subsequently. I frankly think that I put more emotion into my Greek work than anyone had so far.

After that, I went to Egypt. The light in Egypt is very different. It's a desert light. It's not the gentle light of Greece, which is very peculiar because it is soft and brilliant at the same time. It's what I call a sort of "champagne" light. At sundown, for color the light is miraculous--as Byron would say, "the violet-crowned Athens." The light is violet, and the hills around are violet, and the sky too. The Parthenon assumes that wonderful glow which is like sunburned flesh, brilliant and scintillating and alive, with golden sensuality all of its own.

In Egypt, I found the contrast was very strong, and I stressed that in my photographs. I made it even more strong so that the simplicity of Egyptian architecture and Egyptian sculpture would be brought out by eliminating a lot of half-tones. I then returned several years later and

worked in the Cairo Museum trying to duplicate my artificial light with sunlight, which is always an interesting problem, and which produces, I think, very strong plastic effects.

I also went to Lebanon and photographed the great temples of Baalbek and the caravan city of Palmyra in Syria. You know, Palmyra was the great trading post in the very first centuries of the Roman Empire. Queen Zenobia, who was quite a personality, revolted against Rome but was defeated, and as she was escaping, she was caught by the Romans. Some say that she was retired to a villa in Italy and others say that she died. Anyway, she walked in triumph behind the Roman emperor, but she had so many chains, which were really jewels, that she couldn't walk too fast, so they had to put her onto another chariot. This other chariot was the chariot which she had especially designed for her triumphant entrance to Rome, only it wasn't a triumph, she came as a prisoner.

In Mexico, I found that dividing a book in three parts was quite a successful way of presenting that country, which is so varied and so extraordinary and so fascinating: first, the nature of the country; then the pre-Columbian period; and then the Colonial period of Spanish Baroque. If I were doing the book today, I would add a fourth part, and that would be contemporary Mexico, where they have really achieved wonderful things in the way of modern art, in particular the new anthropological museum in Mexico City.

The African trip was not planned. It was in a sense an accident. I met two Swiss doctors; one was an elderly man who was studying African diseases, and the other one was an Alpine climber who climbed Kilimanjaro in Kenya. I met them before their trip, and subsequently we got together as we were taking different routes, in Kenya. We got two box-body Fords, which was the nearest to today's Jeep, and we drove all the way through Uganda and the Belgian Congo and what was then Equatorial Africa, as far as Lake Chad; we then took a truck and drove to Nigeria, and from Nigeria, by truck and by bus, right across the Sahara Desert to Algiers. It was a very strenuous but fascinating trip, and I met a lot of wonderful native tribes and induced them to dance. I think all of Africa could have been seduced with phonograph records instead of guns, because the natives are so hospitable (at least, in those days they were) and would dance at the drop of a hat and really behave like children, which had great freshness and charm about it. It was a naive exuberance and tremendous energy.

Then, of course, the wild life is wonderful. None of us believed in killing animals, but we photographed them. Sometimes we would take quite great risks. One night we were chased by a hippopotamus in the darkness and we had to spend the night on the roof of the truck. Another enemy which was probably just as dangerous were

malarial mosquitoes. That night we were devoured by them, and we were all of us very sick later on when we returned to Europe.

DIXON: Have you had recurrent bouts of malaria?

HUENE: No, it all came at the same time.

DIXON: Aren't there two or three types of malaria?

HUENE: Yes, many different types. Of course, what is worse than malaria is the tsetse fly of the sleeping sickness. The Cameroons at that time (this was in 1936) were completely devoid of any cattle. They had all been destroyed by the tsetse fly. I saw natives sitting in deck chairs and waiting to die. The whole village would be infected. All victims of sleeping sickness. There were some very grim sights, along with the more exotic and extraordinary sights of dancers. Some quite terrible things.

DIXON: Why did you decide to travel?

HUENE: Well, I wanted to see the world we live in.

DIXON: That's probably the most reasonable answer I can think of.

HUENE: And also I wanted to make certain photographic records of certain things that interested me.

DIXON: You had begun, I know, as a fashion photographer, and I wondered--did you want to get out of fashion photography?

HUENE: That is correct. I wanted to get out of it and

have stimulants for further photography from other sources. Fashions became rather monotonous after all those years. I wanted to do archeological photography in a way that had not been done before. That is to say, these photographs would never please the archeologists, who want blueprints; but I wanted to interpret ancient buildings and ancient sites, and glamorize them, just as I had done with beautiful women. I had never seen photographs, in those days, that had rendered these great monuments in the way I thought they should be.

DIXON: Photography hadn't yet begun, really, to come into its own.

HUENE: Of course, we had no color to speak of. We had the Finlay process, which was not particularly satisfactory; Kodachrome and Ektachrome came in much later. I think they came in in the late '30's, and they only had the large size. I believe the smallest was size 4 x 5. Roll film came in much later. Now we have in still photography, the equivalent of what they use in movies--that is, the negative-positive color put out by Eastman. You see, when you see the name Technicolor on the screen, it means that the Technicolor Laboratories have processed that film, but it's always Eastman film. Whether it's called Deluxe or this or that, it's always Eastman. It depends on where the film is processed.

Now, you know in color engraving, let us say we have

a Kodachrome which we want to reproduce on paper and print it. The engraver has to make four separation negatives, the three primary colors, plus black. Let us say the transparency is a little bit on the reddish side--well, then you play down your red cut. You have four cuts, as I said before, of the three primary colors and black. If you reduce the intensity of your magenta cut, the other cuts, the yellow and the cyan, remain exactly the same. What you have done is to reduce the intensity of your magenta cut. Now this was possible on three-strip technicolor, because the principle was the same. There were three strips of the three primary colors prismatically photographed through filters, all simultaneously, of course. Then they were superimposed, and the sum total was what you saw on the screen in full color. That was comparatively easy to control as far as color discrepancies were concerned. There's always room for improvement in everything.

Now, on this new Eastman film, which is a monopack, a negative to be printed in positive, you cannot control the color as easily, because, let us say as in the previous case, your reds are too strong. You would like to reduce the magenta. The magenta can be reduced, but then it increases the intensity of the two other colors. Your whole, overall, will become much more blue and more yellow. Now, this poses quite an intricate and difficult problem. The film in itself is overcolored, especially the blues

and yellows. It is designed for skintones, whereas for instance, Ansco is designed for landscapes--the greens are very fine but the skintones are relatively not too satisfactory and the effect is rather pastel, a little bit on the wishy-washy side. On the other hand, the Eastman color in my opinion is overcolored, so therefore the problem is to give color its importance where it can be of significance. For instance, you introduce a single color note into a monochromatic ensemble, for effect.

In most realistic paintings, and I don't mean abstract or cubist, but paintings that are nearer to photography, you will find that there is a dominant color: it's either warm or it's cold. For instance, let's say Rembrandt's color schemes are gold and brown and that glowing in-between fleshtone and black, but they're definitely warm, on the sepia side. Corot's landscapes of the later period, when he painted willow trees, and rivers, are mostly of a pearly grey and various shades of a colder grey. Then you get Corot's early period in Italy, where his skies are not too bright, not too blue, but they are wonderful warm ochres with the sun playing on the Mediterranean buildings, and everything is in colors of ivories and apricots and very subdued greens.

Well, you see, in all of these instances you have an overall color. If you mix up a lot of colors and don't have a dominant color, your eye gets distracted and you

don't know what you're looking at. Then you get a sort of chromo-postcard effect.

In order to design a picture, you have the problem of figuring out what sort of wardrobe goes into what background. You see, my function is to have the art director and the wardrobe people know exactly what the two departments were doing, and then decide on what the overall was going to look like, because you cannot design sets and have the wardrobe disregarded. It wouldn't make any sense. It all has to jell. It has to be coordinated, and that is my function. Now, very often a certain outfit, let's say, on the star, has to play against various backgrounds, and some combinations are satisfactory and some are not. That, of course, is unavoidable. But on the whole we can always juggle things around, especially if you're designing sets. If they're existing locations, then you have to accept what you have.

Blue is the strongest color, as I said, on this Eastman film, to such an extent that shadows on the sidewalk will photograph bright blue; and if a man or a woman has on a grey flannel suit, the suit will come out blue because that particular cold grey photographs blue. And cars. When we see a red car, we think of it as a red car. If we look at it closely, we find that the reflection of the sky on the polished surface will kill the red and reflect blue. Maybe our eyes aren't observant enough to see it as

the camera does, but if we photograph it, the sides will be red and the top will be blue. There's nothing you can do about that. You have to know how the camera will record things and this comes with experience.

DIXON: You were going to say, I think, about how you got into motion pictures.

HUENE: Well, I did several documentaries in color in Spain and one black-and-white in Greece. An old friend of mine who is a very talented director, George Cukor, wanted me to come and help him with his first color picture, which was a remake of A Star Is Born, with Judy Garland and James Mason. I took the first plane and came over, and since then we have worked together on most of Cukor's color pictures. I've also worked for a lot of other directors in various places, here and in Europe, but all for American companies.

DIXON: What kind of experiences have you had? Any particular incidents with the star system?

HUENE: Well, there was one rather funny incident. We were in Pakistan doing a picture called Bhowani Junction with Ava Gardner. It was a passive-resistance scene with a lot of rather nice people, for extras, schoolteachers, intellectuals, students, professors, who lay down on the tracks of the train. The subject matter was the independence of India, and the train was full of English soldiers. This was one way of stopping the train from going. The English

officer decided that he would have some Untouchables throw the refuse from the station onto these people--the mere fact of their being polluted by the refuse thrown from Untouchables, would make them become penitents for months and months. That was the story.

So we had all these people very neatly dressed in white, and they were all lying down on the tracks, and then there was a train and there was steam coming out of the engine and everything was ready, and we wanted to see a rehearsal. We had placed the cameras, and the cameramen were looking through the viewers, but the interpreter got something wrong, and the men threw all the swill onto the people with no cameras cranking at all! That meant re-dressing them, which took at least two hours. It was rather funny.

DIXON: Have you found it difficult to work with some of the stars who think they know more about photography than you do?

HUENE: On the whole, no. I think if a star is intelligent and has imagination, they treat us, I mean the wardrobe people and the cinematographers and the make-up experts, they treat us as they should. We really are sort of doctors in a sense, you see. Of course, no one is infallible. We always make tests and see what, let's say, a new kind of hairdo or make-up would look like. Not that tests are very conclusive, but at least they give you an

idea how the particular change will photograph. Now, there are certain stars who think they know everything, and that of course puts it on a different kind of plane. In the case of the poor late Marilyn Monroe, that was a very pathetic instance of a disturbed mind, she just wouldn't come to work on certain days, or on certain days she would come to the studio and be made up and then go away before shooting time.

DIXON: She was difficult, to say the least.

HUENE: Extremely so.

DIXON: Had you worked with her quite a bit?

HUENE: Yes. That was the second picture, where she hardly ever turned up. So in the end the studio gave up.

DIXON: Have you stayed mostly with Warner Brothers, or just with Cukor?

HUENE: No. Star Is Born was at Warner Brothers, and we made the Chapman Report at Warner Brothers. Then at Fox, I worked on a picture with [Jean] Negulesco, The Rains of Ranchipur, it was called. Then at Metro, I worked on Les Girls and Merry Andrew (that was another director; Cukor did Les Girls). Bhowani Junction was Metro, but English Metro, shot in the interiors in London. Then I worked on Heller in Pink Tights at Paramount, and The Five Pennies, and three other pictures. One was done in Vienna, one was done in Naples and Rome, and another one here. Sometimes I can't keep track of them.

DIXON: Do you find it more practical or more difficult to work in Europe as opposed to here?

HUENE: Much more difficult to work in Europe.

DIXON: Why?

HUENE: Because the people you work with are not as professional as they are here. You see, the whole motion picture industry in Europe is a sort of adventure. Here it's an industry. There it's sort of a happy-go-lucky thing that's not taken too seriously, although I must say that they produce magnificent pictures. But their methods of working are very disconcerting and very difficult to us, who are used to a certain discipline and a certain pride in work. On the other hand, Europeans are very good at improvising. They can do with much less than we can here. Here we have an overabundance of facilities. It's a luxury to work in a studio, and all the men are highly specialized, well trained, and very proud of their profession. Of course, nothing is impossible; but in Europe I find that the disorganization makes everything last much longer. It's slower, and although there are some very good experts, it's usually guesswork.

DIXON: Do they insist on the afternoon siesta?

HUENE: Well, no, but then, for instance, in Rome you couldn't eat lunch in less than an hour, it took so long at the commissary. They didn't care. The time didn't mean too much. In Spain, they start shooting at two or

three o'clock in the afternoon and they end at midnight, which is not very pleasant for us who like to get up early in the morning. But, of course, some of the girls loved to be photographed later in the day than early in the morning.

DIXON: You mentioned that you set a new style in fashion photography. How?

HUENE: Well, in the first place, film was very slow in those days. We had no film; we had plates. Snapshots of action, small-sized film, was very grainy, and every time we'd blow it up it would look amateurish. We hadn't reached the point of working with small-sized cameras on fine-grained film. Whenever a model posed, it looked as if she was posing for a portrait; it was not the way you would see a fashionable woman in real life. Now, the illustrators would depict these women the way they were seen on the streets, getting in and out of a car, or opening a door, and that is what I tried to do. I tried to make them look the way we saw them, not as if they were posing for static portraits. I think that was the first innovation.

Then, as I was trying to introduce realism, my pictures became too cluttered, and so finally I had to go back to simplicity. But what I was trying to do was to catch the beginning or the end of a movement, and yet of course she'd have to be static because it would have to be a fairly long exposure. I think that I got fashion

photography out of its doldrums of being static and dull and uninteresting, and infused it with a new vitality.

I find that you have to relax women and make them look charming and beautiful and natural, and not tire them out. They have to have a feeling of the body, of a harmonious equilibrium of shoulders, hips, knees, and neck. I think they also have to have a feeling of the dress they are wearing, so it doesn't look as if somebody had just put it on them for a photograph. They ought to have the dramatic feeling of how a woman would move and how she would behave, what her gestures would be in that particular dress, because every attire that either men or women wear obviously makes them behave and move differently. Men walk differently in togas than they do in overalls, and they certainly walk differently in Arab clothes, in Biblical clothes, than in ancient Roman uniforms. I'm sure that the Greeks, who wore very little, had probably much better posture than people who dress today for colder climates. I think if you go down to the beach, you'll see that girls and boys move and walk better because their bodies are exposed to the eyes of the world than when they are covered up. That is an extreme example of behaving in or out of clothes. I've noticed in most historical pictures, the extras don't move well in period costumes, whereas for instance if you would take desert people of North Africa or Palestine and put them into Biblical

clothes, which are almost identical with what they are wearing today, they would look perfectly natural.

DIXON: I notice your different file boxes. Are those photographs that you've taken?

HUENE: No, that's all magazine stuff that I file--interesting articles and reproductions. This is all going to go to USC. The entire library. But you see, all of that contains Italian painting, Netherlands; this is contemporary; and nineteenth century painting in here. Whenever there's a reproduction in a magazine, I cut it out and staple it on a card. They're all uniform sizes, and it's quite a collection. I've been doing this for twenty years.

DIXON: Did you start collecting just for your own edification?

HUENE: There are so many reproductions in magazines that do not appear in art books, and how are you going to keep them? It's a pity to throw them away--they are so useful. This is what led me to do this, and it developed into quite a project.

INDEX

Académie La Grande Chaumière, Paris	13
Acropolis, Greece	29-30
Africa	32-33
Alexandra, Empress of Russia	6
Alix, Mme.	26
AnSCO film	36
Art Center School, Los Angeles	17-22
Balenciaga, Cristobal	26
Beardsley, Aubrey	19
Bérard, Christian	26-27
Berchtold, Leopold von	4-5
<u>Bhowani Junction</u> (film)	38, 40
<u>Bolsheviks</u>	6, 9
Boutet de Monvel, Bernard	22
Brunhoff, Michel de	24
Cameroun, Africa	33
Chabrier, Alexis	26
Chanel, Gabrielle	24-26, 28
<u>Chapman Report</u> (film)	40
<u>Cocteau, Jean</u>	27-28
Comédie Française	26
Corot, Jean Baptiste	36
<u>Cotillon</u> (ballet)	26
<u>Cukor, George</u>	38, 40
Dali, Salvador	28
Delys, Gaby	24
Doré, Gustave	18
Drian, A.	24-25
Duncan, Isadora	25
Eastman film	34, 35-36, 37
Egypt	30-31
Ektachrome film	34
<u>Fantastic Symphony</u> (ballet)	26
<u>Fashion, post-World War I</u>	24-26
Fashion illustration	13-14
Fashion magazines, in France	14-15, 22-23
Fashion photography, <u>see</u> <u>Photography, fashion</u>	
<u>The Five Pennies</u> (film)	40
Gardner, Ava	38
Garland, Judy	38
<u>Gazette du Bon Ton</u>	22

Genia	19
Gide, André	29
Gres, House of	26
<u>Harper's Bazaar</u> (magazine)	14, 16
<u>Heller in Pink Tights</u> (film)	40
<u>Howard, Kathleen</u>	14
Howard, Marjorie	14
Hoyningen-Huene, Ann Van Ness (Lothrop)	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11-12
Hoyningen-Huene, George	
childhood in Russia	1-7
in British Army	7-11
fashion photographer, Paris	13-16, 33-34, 42-44
to U.S.	16
travel photography	16-17, 29-34
books	
<u>Mexican Heritage</u>	17
<u>Hellas, a Tribute to Classical</u> <u>Greece</u>	30
as teacher, Art Center School	17-22
commentary on artists, Paris	22-28
on quality of light, Greece and Egypt	29-31
on color photography	34-38
as motion picture photographer	38-42
Hoyningen-Huene, _____ (father of George Hoyningen-Huene)	1-2, 4-5, 7, 11-12
Imperial Lyceum, St. Petersburg	4
Jouvet, Louis	27
Kerensky, Aleksander	7
Kodachrome film	34, 35
Lepape, Georges	22
<u>Les Girls</u> (film)	40
<u>Life</u> (magazine)	23
<u>Losch, Tilly</u>	27
Lothe, André	13
Lothrop, George Van Ness	1
Luce, Henry	23
Lyautey, Louis	28-29
Magazine publishing, in France	22-24
Makhno (brigand)	8
Maria Feodorovna, Dowager Empress of Russia	6
Martin, Charles	22
Marty, André	22
Mason, James	38

<u>Mérimée, Prosper, <u>The Loves of Carmen</u></u>	17
<u>Merry Andrew (film)</u>	40
<u>Mexico</u>	31
Monroe, Marilyn	40
Morocco	28
<u>Mozartiana (ballet)</u>	26
Nast, Condé	16, 22-23
Negulesco, Jean	40
Nicholas II, Czar of Russia	1, 2, 5
Novorossiysk, Russia	11
<u>Ondine (play)</u>	27
Palmyra, Syria	31
Photography, archeological	29-31, 34
Photography, color	34-38
Photography, fashion	14-16, 42-44
Photography	
motion picture	39-40
in Europe	41-42
Photography, teaching of	17-22
Pushkin, Aleksander	4
<u>The Rains of Ranchipur (film)</u>	40
<u>Rasputin, Grigori Efimovich</u>	5
Ray, Man	14
Rembrandt van Rijn	20, 36
Russian Revolution	5-6
British intervention in	7-11
St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia	1, 2-4, 7
<u>Seventh Symphony (ballet)</u>	26
<u>Stalin, Josef</u>	9
<u>A Star Is Born (film)</u>	38, 40
<u>Stelchen, Edward</u>	16
Tchelitchev, Paul	27
Thayat, Ernesto	22
Tsaritsyn (Volvograd), Russia	9-10
Vasquez Rocks, California	18
Velasquez, Rodríguez de Silva y	20
Vermeer, Jan	20
Vogel, Lucien	22-24, 28
<u>Vogue (magazine)</u>	14, 15, 16, 22-23
<u>Vu (magazine)</u>	23
Warner Brothers	40
Wilde, Oscar, <u>Salomé</u>	19
World War I, in Russia	4-7
Wrangel, Peter Nicolaievich	9-10
Wrangel, Baroness	9-10

Yalta, Russia	5-6
Yussupov, Felix	5
Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra	31



