

**Samuel Prentiss Bailey**  
1890-1959

Founder of the  
S. Prentiss Bailey Fund in

The New York Community Trust  
909 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

*In 1960, the will of Samuel Prentiss Bailey established the S. Prentiss Bailey Fund, to be administered by The New York Community Trust for charitable purposes.*

The year was 1941. France lay under German occupation. In the customhouse at Hendaye, on the French-Spanish border, an American-born banker from Paris and his young French wife, en route to the United States, waited nervously for clearance into Spain. Hidden in their luggage were more than a hundred important messages from French citizens to relatives and other contacts in America. Sam and Denise Bailey had agreed to act as couriers. Both knew that, if the messages were found by the German officers supervising the French customs operations, their liberty and possibly their lives would be in danger.

As the inspection of the luggage began, Denise was left with the searchers and the baggage while Sam was escorted into an adjoining room. There he was permitted to watch the proceedings through a narrow windowpane. Ordered to open the first suitcase, a particularly old and shabby one, Denise could not make the lock yield to her key. Bailey's tension increased when he saw his wife hand the key to a German officer as ordered. Unknown to Denise, most of the messages were hidden in that shabby case. The German struggled with the lock. At last he gave up. Sam Bailey sighed with relief and then watched with relaxed amusement while his pretty wife with Gallic charm distracted the officer from further search. Clearance was granted without other incident or delay.

It was a story that Sam Bailey, raconteur of many lively tales, loved to tell again and again for years afterward.

Samuel Prentiss Bailey was born on February 12, 1890, in Winona, Minnesota. His parents were Clark Evans Bailey and Lucretia Prentiss Bailey. As a young man in his early twenties,

Clark Bailey had moved west from Antwerp, New York, his birthplace, taking with him his bride, the daughter of a Judge Prentiss of Montpelier, Vermont. To help allay his wife's homesickness, Clark Bailey had allowed her to choose the place for their permanent settlement. Lucretia picked Winona, on the banks of the Mississippi, because the area somehow reminded her of the Green Mountains of Vermont that she missed so much.

Clark Bailey established a small department store in Winona which grew and flourished with the town. He and Lucretia had four children: Samuel Prentiss, whom they called by his middle name; Luther, Francis, and Katharine. As he grew older, Prentiss disliked his name and persuaded his friends and later his associates in public life to call him Sam, or sometimes Bill, after an old song. But he was always "Prent" to his family and those closest to him.

While still a little boy, Prent decided he wanted to be a farmer. During summer vacations from school, he worked on nearby farms, proving himself a conscientious worker. Sometimes his conscientiousness was to his own detriment. Once he was given the job of escorting a carload of prize pigs to a state fair. The farmer insisted that Prentiss ride in the railroad car with the pigs. Young Prent was willing — after all, it was part of the job. But after the train had been stuck in a tunnel for several hours, the boy emerged from the pigs' car with his mind somewhat changed about a future in farming.

When the Bailey children were old enough to be sent away to school, Lucretia Bailey insisted that they be given the experience of living in the East. Prentiss attended the Asheville School in Asheville, North Carolina. After graduation in 1908, he enrolled at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. But by the middle of his sophomore year, Prentiss recognized that he was not suited for the liberal arts curriculum. His experience with the carload

of pigs notwithstanding, Prent transferred to the agriculture course at the University of Wisconsin. The following year he moved again, this time to the University of Minnesota, where he obtained his degree.

Sam Bailey's first job after college was with a newspaper, *The Minneapolis Tribune*, where he worked for three years. Then he tried the advertising business for a time. But Sam was a restless, intensely curious young man. His family was deeply concerned about him, fearing that, already 27 years old, he might never find a career that genuinely satisfied him. Meanwhile, there was a war going on in Europe. He wanted to be involved. He became the first young man in Winona to enlist — and to be turned down because he was underweight. Thin but wiry, he was refused by one branch of the service after another. Undaunted, he put himself on a weight-gaining diet, drinking huge quantities of buttermilk. Unfortunately, the buttermilk did not agree with him, and instead of gaining weight, he succeeded only in losing more.

Exasperated but undefeated, Sam Bailey bought his own ticket and sailed for France in October of 1917. Two weeks later he enlisted in the French Army as an ambulance driver. Subsequently, he transferred to the U.S. forces. Continually in the thick of the fighting, the courageous young man from Minnesota was recognized as a hero by the "Poilus" — his French comrades on the front lines. Promoted to the rank of sergeant, he was cited three times in French Army Orders and was awarded both the French and the Belgian Croix de Guerre.

The war ended, and Sam was discharged in the winter of 1919. He had no desire to return to Minnesota and the advertising business or to enter his father's firm. After a short visit to his family in Winona, Sam went to England, where he joined Cox and Company, a banking firm. Within a few months he received a transfer to France, the country he had come to love as his

own. Five years later he joined the Paris branch of the Equitable Trust Company. This firm eventually merged with The Chase National Bank, which later became Chase Manhattan, and Bailey rose steadily from Cashier to Vice President during his 25 years of service.

In the years following the World War, Bailey took an active role in promoting French-American relations. He participated in the formation of the American Legion in Paris, and for five years between 1926 and 1934 he was a delegate of FIDAC — Fédération Interalliée des Anciens Combattants — a veterans' organization formed in 1920 and including in its membership World War I veterans' groups of eleven nations. The American Legion was the member association representing the United States in FIDAC, which had its headquarters in Paris.

On March 1, 1935, Samuel Prentiss Bailey was awarded the Knight's Cross of the French Legion of Honor for his enduring interest and activity in cementing the relationship between the two countries. The ceremony of award was held in Pershing Hall, the headquarters of the American Legion in France, and was attended by several members of the French chamber of deputies, by leaders of the French veterans' organizations, and by officials of FIDAC. Monsieur Georges Rivollet, French Minister of Pensions, presented the award to Bailey, noting in his address, "In decorating you, I not only decorate the soldier; I also decorate the remarkable liaison officer of the post-war Franco-American union."

Two years later, Sam Bailey made the first direct radio broadcast from France to the United States. It was his Memorial Day address, on May 30, 1937, at one of the American cemeteries in France.


All through those active and enjoyable years, Sam had lived the contented life of a single man. But in January of 1937, the 46-year-old bachelor's life changed radically. He married Denise Charlotte Marie Huré, a lovely and vivacious 23-year-old Parisienne. Their friends

considered it a glorious match, despite their difference in ages. The young Denise was mature and sophisticated. The older Sam was youthful and enthusiastic. They divided their time between their apartment in Paris and a house in the country, "La Butte," in the village of Feucherolles, in Seine-et-Oise.

When the German armies occupied France in May of 1940, Sam sent Denise to the relative safety of Chateaufort-sur-Cher, but she rejoined him in Paris as soon as the situation there became clear. Other officials from the bank already had fled, and Bailey, the highest-ranking person left, was forced to stand by while German occupation soldiers sealed the bank's lock boxes and, in effect, assumed control. After seven months in Paris under the occupation, both Baileys were ready to leave for the United States. They fled via Hendaye and Spain to Lisbon, Portugal, where they boarded the S.S. Excalibur, a ship crowded with refugees, and sailed for New York.

Samuel Prentiss Bailey was a patriotic man. Never content to sit and do nothing, he believed he should aid the war effort in whatever way he could. Soon after their arrival in the United States, he requested a leave of absence from Chase Manhattan, and the Baileys moved to Washington, D.C. There Sam Bailey joined the Treasury Department to organize and direct the wartime Foreign Funds Control program, a work for which he was well qualified by his European banking experience.

It was during these hectic times that Sam's old boyhood dream began to recur, always as an increasingly desirable and timely possibility. He still wanted very much to be a farmer, and there seemed to be no better time to acquire land. He and Denise traveled to New Mexico during Christmas vacation in 1942 and bought a ranch near Las Vegas. Because of his war work, Sam immediately leased the ranch back to its former owner to operate. But it would not be for several years — until "VE Day" in 1945, in fact

— that Sam could resign his Treasury post and commence the outdoor career of his dreams. He commemorated this turning point in his life by adopting "VE", in the form  as his cattle-brand.

Although he had accumulated substantial wealth through judicious investments, Bailey was not content to be merely a gentleman farmer. There were thousands of acres and hundreds of cattle in his "spread," and he not only supervised the operation but often pitched in to help with round-ups and branding. He was admired and respected by his cowhands, and in the town he was well known to all and renowned for his easy, friendly manner. It was said that he knew everyone in the town from the mayor to the charwomen, and enjoyed knowing each in their individual ways.

For Denise, "petite Parisienne," the ranch was an extraordinary experience. Although ranching would never be for her the passion that it was for Sam, she adapted rapidly to the rugged life. Good sport as well as good sports-woman, she rode and worked with her husband, and at round-up time she handled the branding-iron herself.

After the war, the Baileys visited Hawaii, where both fell so in love with the place that they leased land and built a home near Koko Head. But they never stayed long on the island. Adventuring to distant places was a magnet that exerted a strong pull, and they circled the globe time after time. After each trip, Sam would retreat once more to his dream-come-true and work long and hard on the New Mexico ranch. Denise would stay as long as she could, but the lure of the Pacific island was always too strong for her. She would return to Hawaii until Sam could join her. Then, before long, they would be off again together on another world-wide trip.

Although they had no children, the Baileys enjoyed close ties with Sam's nieces and nephews and saw them from time to time. Denise's own family still lived in Paris, and she and Sam

maintained an apartment there as well as their home in the French countryside. Thus they were able to spend considerable time with Denise's relatives and to enjoy the warmth and intimacy of French family life. So far as Sam Bailey was concerned, he was a man of two countries: He loved well both the land of his birth and his adopted France, and he proudly wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor.

In the summer of 1958, Mr. Bailey's health began to fail. He was in his late sixties, but his spirit and vitality never wavered. After major surgery at the Mayo Clinic, in Minnesota, where Denise remained with him constantly, he drove back to the ranch. He believed that he had made a complete recovery, and to celebrate his return to health, he and Denise made a pleasure trip to Death Valley and Las Vegas, Nevada. But a relapse soon followed this happy holiday. On June 7, 1959, Samuel Prentiss Bailey died at his beloved ranch, with his devoted wife by his side. He was 69 years old.

Sam Bailey was a vital person with many interests and many capabilities. A thoroughly undeceptive man, his strongest traits included a high sense of honor, a very real *joie de vivre*, and a fine ability to appreciate. Hard fighter and hard worker, he played hard, too. He was grateful for the many successes and good things that came his way. His moral outlook was deeply influenced by his mother, a woman of many charities, and this influence found expression in the philanthropic fund established by Samuel Prentiss Bailey's will, a fund by which he hoped to show appreciation for his own good life by helping others find deeper satisfaction in their own.



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