Measuring Progress

As this decade - the ‘aught’ decade of the 21st century - comes to a close, it is appropriate to pause and consider all that our small team has accomplished. Let’s begin by restating the primary objectives: to honor the legacy of the Monuments Men and women by making their story known to the broadest audience possible, and to complete their mission to the best of our ability. Four years have, as years seem to do, vanished in the blink of an eye, but our accomplishments will, we hope, bring recognition to these heroes of civilization for all time.

Creative Content
Telling the story of these heroes required creating content to engage the public. We made every effort to deliver that content using a variety of mediums. The most tangible results are:

2006
*Rescuing Da Vinci* - My first book is a photographic telling of the Monuments Men story using 460 images, many of which have not been seen since the war, some never. This is the first and only such book to gather these photographs and present the story in a visual way.

2007
*The Rape of Europa* - We co-produced and provided major funding for this award-winning documentary film, based on scholar Lynn Nicholas’s book of the same name. We also produced a collector’s edition which includes 7 hours of additional footage. This film had a successful theatrical run followed by a national broadcast on PBS. It has been televised around the world on the National Geographic channel.

2008
*The Greatest Theft in History Educational Program* - Developed by a panel of distinguished educators under the supervision of leading experts, this program deepens our understanding of World War II and its impact on cultural property, its root causes, costs, and victories. It includes a 3 disk, 9 hour DVD which we directed and produced along with extensive online lesson plans for educators and students.

2009
*The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History* - My second book tells the narrative story of the Monuments Men in northern Europe using many never before seen letters home to loved ones written during combat. It is being published in 17 languages and will make these heroes’ story accessible to almost 4 billion people.

*Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: The Hermann Goering Collection* - We published this important book, written by scholar Nancy Yeide, which is an essential research tool for those working in the area of restitution, education and the Holocaust.
Engaging the Public

I relish the opportunity to speak to audiences of all ages. I frequently meet people with important connections to this story, sometimes develop related leads, and always appreciate the chance to share my passion about these heroes with others. In the past four years I’ve spoken to audiences totaling more than 12,000 people at some of the most august institutions in our country, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Yale University Art Gallery, National Gallery of Art, National World War II Museum, and the Eisenhower Institute. Of course, I can’t speak to everyone one-on-one, so national media is always at the heart of our efforts. This year alone I’ve appeared on News Hour with Jim Lehrer, The Morning Joe Show, BBC World News, and BBC World Radio.

In the past four years that coverage has included Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, New York Times, Bloomberg, CNN, CBS Sunday Morning, and The Charlie Rose Show, to name but a few.

Completing the Mission

When millions of soldiers were returning home at war’s end in 1945, the demands on the Monuments Men were exploding: millions of stolen cultural items had to be protected, sorted, and returned. By the time the Monuments Men did return home in 1951, they had restituted more than 5 million objects. Still, hundreds of thousands of objects - paintings, drawings, musical manuscripts, and documents - remain missing. In the coming years some of these objects will surface. The Monuments Men Foundation will continue to advise those in possession of such items to aid in their return to the rightful owners.

To bring visibility to the work of the Monuments Men and women and begin putting their legacy to its fullest and best use, I founded the Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art in 2007. In the short time since the Foundation has been operational we have discovered two important cultural items: the “Hitler Albums,” which the Foundation donated to the National Archives in November 2007 and Chief Archivist of the National Archives, Professor Allen Weinstein, referred to as “one of the most significant finds related to Hitler's premeditated theft of art and other cultural treasures to be found since the Nuremberg trials,” and the Gemäldegalerie Linz Album XIII which will be presented to Germany at the Department of State ceremony on January 22, 2010. I will return this album to Berlin in May 2010. However, our discoveries were not limited to “things.” Several months ago the Foundation located Monuments woman Mary Regan Quessenberry, who is still living, in Boston.
Honors

We’ve experienced many humbling moments, including the heartfelt expressions of gratitude from the Monuments Men and women and their families for bringing recognition to their service, to formal tributes from officials and organizations, both locally and nationally, some of which are detailed below.

**June 6, 2007**: Passage of Congressional Resolutions, in both the House and Senate, which for the first time in the United States recognized the 350 or so men and women of thirteen nations who served in the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section.

**November 15, 2007**: The Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art received the 2007 National Humanities Medal from President Bush at a White House ceremony. This is our nation’s highest honor for work in the humanities.

**November 9, 2008**: Robert Edsel received the Hope for Humanity Award from the Dallas Holocaust Museum Center for Education and Tolerance, given to those who are a testament to the Museum’s mission of tolerance.

**May 22, 2009**: The Monuments Men Foundation received an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design at their graduation ceremony. Robert Edsel delivered the commencement address to an audience of more than 1,000 people.
The launch of *The Monuments Men* in September was the culmination of years of research and interviews. The support of our publisher, Hachette/Center Street and independent booksellers like Jake Reiss at The Alabama Booksmith, kind words from Julie Andrews and Met Director Thomas Campbell, and reuniting of the Rorimer family at the Metropolitan Museum were all unforgettable moments.
...Honoring the Heroes

Dr. Nick Mueller and his team at the National World War II Museum have been hugely supportive of our efforts. We were honored to be special guests at the recent dedication ceremony of the Solomon Victory Theater and Stage Door Canteen, alongside Tom Hanks and Tom Brokaw.
Monuments Men Foundation Announces
Discovery of “Führermuseum” Album

On December 9, the Monuments Men Foundation announced the discovery of an album containing photographs of Hitler’s most beloved works of art destined for his Führermuseum in Linz, Austria. This item, formally called the Gemäldegalerie Linz Album XIII, was taken as a souvenir by an American soldier from Hitler’s home in Berchtesgaden in early May 1945. The veteran, Mr. John Pistone, was serving with Company B, 20th Armored Division, 8th Armored Infantry Battalion. In an act of grace, Mr. Pistone and his family made the decision to work with the Monuments Men Foundation to identify the importance of the album and return it to Germany. Mr. Pistone was unaware of the significance of the album until his friend, Don Roth, put him in contact with the Monuments Men Foundation. In fact, he had never heard about the Nazis’ systematic looting much less Hitler’s plans for a museum in his hometown of Linz. Neither had he heard about the noble work of the Monuments Men.

This album belongs to a group of 31 original albums containing photographs of the works of art intended for the planned Gemäldegalerie Linz. These albums are the only documents that show which works of art were actually selected by Hitler for his Führermuseum. Until the discovery of this album, number XIII, only 19 such albums were known to exist, all having been found at Berchtesgaden in early May 1945. The other 19 albums are currently on display at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. We want to thank Dr. Birgit Schwarz for her valuable assistance on our research of this discovery.

Album XIII is extremely important because it contains selections by 19th century German masters, which were the core of the Linz collection, personally selected by Hitler. This album includes a number of paintings that had special meaning for Hitler. For example, the album contains Adolf von Menzel’s *Frederick the Great on his Travels* (*Friedrich der Grosse auf Reisen*), which hung in Hitler’s office in the Führerbau in Munich. Hitler idolized Frederick the Great and felt that he identified with him as a German leader as well as an art patron and architect.

The Associated Press broke the story with an exclusive feature article on December 9. Within hours, it was the most popular, most viewed and most emailed news story on Yahoo!. I hope and believe that this news, and the example set by Mr. Pistone, will bring the much needed visibility to our efforts to finish the mission of the Monuments Men and assist others who may be in the possession of items “liberated” or stolen during the World War II era. In fact, in the two days following the release of the story, the volume of emails and phone calls we normally received from people concerned about a cultural item in their possession increased dramatically.

The Gemäldegalerie Linz Album XIII will be presented to a representative of the German government at a State Department ceremony on January 22, 2010. Following the ceremony, it will be on display at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans for a three month exhibit before being returned to Germany.
Second Living Monuments Woman Identified: Mary Regan Quessenberry

After watching an interview with Robert Edsel on BBC regarding his new book, *The Monuments Men*, Ms. Quessenberry’s niece contacted the Monuments Men Foundation about her aunt’s role as a Monuments officer. Mr. Edsel immediately traveled to Boston to meet with Mary, and presented her with a flag of the United States that had flown over the United States Capitol in honor of the Monuments Men. Mary also received a gold leaf copy of the Resolution that was passed in both the House and the Senate which for the first time in the United States recognized the heroic efforts of the members of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section.

Born in Boston on October 10, 1915, Mary Regan attended Radcliffe College and later received a master’s degree in Fine Art from Harvard, where her professors included Monuments Men Paul Sachs, Langdon Warner, and Mason Hammond, all key figures in Mr. Edsel’s new book, *The Monuments Men*. The United States entered World War II in December 1941. By July 1942 Mary had given up her job as a high school art teacher and was in uniform serving with the WAAC (Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps). Over 400,000 women applied to be part of the first group of women to serve in the US military; only 450 were chosen. She would later become a recruiter for WAC (Women’s Army Corps), where one of the highlights was meeting the Churchill family when they visited Boston. Mary was sent overseas in 1943. Prior to becoming a Monuments officer, she served in the U.S. Army 8th Air Force under General Doolittle; she was also sent to the Royal Air Force base at Medmenham as part of the Central Interpretation Unit. Mary later received orders to report to General Carl “Tooey” Spaatz. At that time General Spaatz commanded the 8th, 9th, and 15th Army Air Corps and led the strategic bombing campaign against Germany reporting directly to General Eisenhower. Mary became “company commander of the 550 WACs who ran Spaatz Headquarters.” For her service as company commander, Mary received a Bronze Star.

Following the Allied victory, Mary read in *Stars and Stripes* that officers with an art history background were needed as Monuments officers. Despite having more than enough points to return home, Mary traveled to Berlin to volunteer for service with the Monuments Men. As a Monuments officer stationed in Berlin, Mary traveled to the Munich Collecting Point, Wiesbaden Collecting Point, various repositories, and badly damaged cities. She worked with fellow Monuments Men Bancel LaFarge, Rose Valland, Charles Kuhn, Calvin Hathaway and others to restitute stolen works of art to their rightful owners. She served as a Monuments officer until 1948, when she retired as a Major after an extraordinary and accomplished military career.

Mary returned home to the United States and taught humanities at the University of Florida, and married her husband Tim Quessenberry in 1965. Mary Regan Quessenberry currently lives in Boston, Massachusetts.
Lots of People to Thank!

Achievements of any sort, much less those unfolding on the world stage, are not singular: key people play important roles, often behind the scenes. We never forget that fact. Dr. Bruce Cole, and Congresswoman Kay Granger each took public positions of support when the Monuments Men Foundation was at a nascent stage. Our thanks to them is endless. Others have helped in ways large and small: Don Roth, Michelle Rapkin, Michelle Weiner, Susan Eisenhower, Dr. Birgit Schwarz, Met Director Tom Campbell, Allen Cullum, Tom Schwartz, Nancy Yeide, Adam Nelson and Lauren Gould. Of course, our small team has for more than three years performed with brilliance: To Christy, Michele, Elizabeth, James, Dorothee, Anne, and Wes - I am so proud of you.

When you spend 60% plus of your time on the road traveling, living in hotel rooms, working out of others’ offices, well...some memorable moments occur. Witnessing the crunched bus in Washington, D.C. one morning,...enjoying the attention of Charlie the cat and “office supervisor” on a stressful afternoon in New York City...and discovering a mound of strawberry ice cream hidden beneath the platter size portion of cotton candy we were served after lunch at the Four Seasons restaurant in Manhattan, were all special moments. None, however, approach the joy of the time we spent getting to know Monuments woman Mary Regan Quessenberry.

Welcome to our New Website: www.monumentsmen.com

Our new website has additional photos, letters, and Nazi documents not seen in The Monuments Men, as well as Monuments Men biographies, news and reviews, upcoming events, links to our other projects, and Robert’s blog. You can also follow Robert on Facebook and Twitter!

Robert M. Edsel Speaking Engagements and Book Signings

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To subscribe to the Monuments Men Newsletter, or to provide us with comments, please contact Elizabeth Ivy Hudson: ehudson@laurelpublishingllc.com.

All photos courtesy of Robert M. Edsel collection unless otherwise noted.