



## Monuments Men Honored in Washington, D.C.

June 6, 2007



On June 6, 2007 The United States government officially recognized the contributions of the Monuments Men during World War II in the protection of artistic and cultural treasures by passing resolutions in both the House and Senate in their name. The resolutions were sponsored by Senators James Inhofe (R-OK), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), and Barbara Boxer (D-CA), and Representatives Kay Granger (R-TX), Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), and Louise Slaughter (D-NY) respectively. Robert M. Edsel hosted the ceremony and introduced those in attendance, including

Congresswoman Granger, Congressman Steve Cohen, and Senator Hutchison who presided over the ceremony and awarded flags to the Monuments Men in attendance which had been flown over the Capitol on Memorial Day. Four of the twelve living Monuments Men were able to attend (as pictured above): Bernard Taper, James Reeds, Harry Ettlinger, and Horace Apgar. Numerous family members of other Monuments Men attended. Of particular note were the ten Ambassadors or Chargés d’Affaires in attendance from the twelve other

*From the Desk of Robert M. Edsel*

As I looked out over the room of people in the Russell Senate Building, filled with Monuments Men, their families, members of Congress, the Diplomatic Corps, and other guests, my eyes welled-up with tears at the realization that we had achieved this milestone. Countless hours of work by my team plus the good will of others all directed towards this defining moment had culminated in the formal opportunity to recognize the heroes of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section.

Congresswoman Kay Granger was eloquent in her remarks. Her respect and admiration for the Monuments Men was evident in both her choice of words and reverent tone. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison also made a few gracious comments before we proceeded with the award portion of the ceremony.

What will remain with me forever was the expression on the face of each Monuments Man as they received their flag. Foremost in my recollection was how each man held their flag upon returning to their seat. Anyone searching for an explanation of what this day meant to them need look no further. For all those who helped us in any way, I extend to you the most heartfelt “thank you.”



nations from which Monuments Men hailed. It was truly an international event.

A private luncheon followed, at which both Robert Edsel and Lynn Nicholas discussed their experiences writing about this great story and getting to know the Monuments Men. It was also a chance for the children and grandchildren of the Monuments Men to get to know one another and share their stories.

The week in Washington, D.C. was filled with many unforgettable experiences. On June 5th, Senator Clinton requested a brief meeting with the Monuments Men at her office. Several of the



*From left: Bernard Taper, Harry Ettlinger, Senator Clinton, Robert Edsel, and Horace Appar.  
(photo courtesy of the Robert M. Edsel Collection)*

Monuments Men also had the opportunity to meet their Congressional representatives. A trip to the National Gallery of Art to

visit with Director Rusty Powell provided a fitting end to the celebrations on June 6th.

## World War II Memorial Visit

*by Robert M. Edsel*



*View of the World War II Memorial with the Washington Monument in the background.  
(photo courtesy of the Robert M. Edsel Collection)*

On the afternoon of June 5th, our group paid a visit to the World War II Memorial. It was a beautiful day in Washington made all the more wonderful by the palpable history we made taking these great heroes of civilization to this hallowed place of honor. We strolled the grounds, walked around the magnificent fountains, and enjoyed each others' companionship. Additionally, the day had even more significance for me because my parents were able to join us. I not only had a chance for my mother and father to meet these heroes and get to know many of the people who have been so integral in the development of the project, but I also had the opportunity to share the experience with another World War II vet: my dad. I will never forget standing behind him as he looked at the names of Pacific Islands he landed on as a young Marine in 1945. It was a very emotional experience for all of us.



## How could our world function without Archival materials?

### Monuments Man Col. Seymour Pomrenze

By Robert M. Edsel



*Col. Pomrenze at the Offenbach Archival Depot, Germany. (photo courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD)*

A former member of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's staff, Col. Pomrenze served as the first director of the Offenbach Archival Depot in 1946. He was instrumental in the restitution of thousands of looted archives, including those of the Strashun Library in Vilna, Lithuania. This was the premier Jewish library in Europe before World War II, and luckily survived the Nazi destruction of Vilna. The contents of the library, along with those of the YIVO building in Vilna, were looted for eventual placement in the anti-Semitic "Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question." Pomrenze oversaw the return of tens of thousands of items from

the Strashun Library to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research headquarters in New York.

After his wartime service, Pomrenze worked as a consultant to the National Archives, and as a records manager and archivist for the U.S. Army from 1950 until 1976. He taught as an adjunct professor in records management at American University in Washington, D.C. until 1980. Colonel Pomrenze holds degrees from the Illinois Institute of Technology, the University of Chicago, and the Spertus College of Jewish Studies. He has served 34 years of active and reserve service with the Army of the United States, and has received numerous military awards including a World War II Victory Medal, a Bronze Star medal for his service in Vietnam, the Legion of Merit, Asiatic-Pacific Medal with three bronze stars, as well as the Netherlands Government Silver Medal of Honor for his work with the MFAA. Pomrenze lectures frequently on topics such as restitu-

tion and Holocaust-era libraries and archives. A first-hand account of his experiences at the Offenbach Archival Depot was shared with the 37th Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish Libraries in 2002.

I first met Col. Pomrenze and his charming wife at their home in the Bronx in October, 2006. Ever well prepared, Col. Pomrenze had assembled on his dining room table some of his personal records, including inventories of



*Robert Edsel and Col. Pomrenze at his home in October, 2006. (photo courtesy of the Robert M. Edsel Collection)*

the millions of artifacts that passed through Offenbach during his tenure. My meeting with him greatly increased my understanding and appreciation of the importance of document preservation and Col. Pomrenze's unique role in caring for them, both during and after the war.



## What is the *Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art*?

At the close of the June 6th ceremony, Robert M. Edsel announced the formation of the Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art, whose mission statement is as follows: “ To preserve the legacy of the unprecedented and heroic work of the men and women who served in the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (“MFAA”) section, known as “Monuments Men,” during World War II, by raising public awareness of the importance of protecting and safeguarding civilization’s most important artistic and cultural treasures from armed conflict.”



*Monuments Men and others Lt. Col. Ernest DeWald, Emile Langui, Capt. Steven Kovalyak, Lt. Craig Hugh Smyth, Andrew Ritchie, Cdr. George Boas, and Maj. Bancel LaFarge gather at the Munich Collecting Point to witness the return to Belgium of Michelangelo’s Bruges Madonna. (photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD)*

For those of you unfamiliar with the Monuments Men, they were a group of 345 or so men and women from thirteen nations who comprised the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section during World War II. Many were museum directors, curators, art historians, and educators. Together they worked to protect monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. In the last year of the war they tracked, located, and ultimately returned more than 5 million artistic and cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis. Their role in preserving cultural treasures was without precedent.

The Monuments Men remained in Europe for up to six years after the conclusion of fighting to oversee the complicated restitution of stolen works of art. During that time they played instrumental roles in rebuilding cultural life in the devastated countries of Europe by organizing temporary art exhibitions and music concerts. Art and culture mattered greatly then – and today – to the Monuments Men.

Upon returning home, many of the Monuments Men and women had extraordinarily prominent roles in building some of the greatest cultural and educational institutions in the United States. They became directors and curators of world renowned museums such as the Met, MOMA, National Gallery of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Toledo Museum of Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and many others. Other revered institutions, such as the New York City Ballet, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Arts, were the tangible results of ideas of the Monuments Men.

To learn more about the Monuments Men Foundation and how you can help, please visit its website:

[www.monumentsmenfoundation.org](http://www.monumentsmenfoundation.org)





## Special Profile: Lynn H. Nicholas

by Robert M. Edsel

One of the great joys at our celebration of the Monuments Men was the opportunity to recognize and honor author and scholar Lynn Nicholas. It was Lynn's ten years of pioneering work which culminated in her remarkable book, *The Rape of Europa*, that first brought the subject of Hitler and the Nazis' planned looting of art and culture during World War II and the role of the Monuments Men into contemporary focus. Lynn possesses that rare combination of abilities: sole-minded focus to accomplish such a significant achievement, yet a comprehensive understanding of the bigger picture. She is gracious and warm to all those with whom she comes in contact.

Most recently Lynn wrote *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web* (2005) which provides a fascinating yet heartbreaking story of Hitler and the Nazis' abuse - and murder - of children to further the Third Reich's racial policies. It is a chilling and compelling story.



Lynn Nicholas speaking at the luncheon following the June 6th ceremonies. (photo courtesy of the Robert M. Edsel collection)



From left: Lynn Nicholas, Sandy Faison (son of Monuments Man S. Lane Faison, Jr.), Louis Rorimer (son of Monuments Man James Rorimer), and Robert Edsel.  
(photo courtesy of the Robert M. Edsel Collection)

At the luncheon which followed the Senate ceremony, Lynn reminisced to our group of Monuments Men, their families, and the family members of other Monuments Men no longer with us, about her early meetings with key members of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section, such as Walker Hancock, Craig Hugh Smyth, and S. Lane Faison, Jr. She reminded all of us that although the stories we find so fascinating usually pertain to "things," this story is, in the end, about people. It is a story about lives lost, a way of life disrupted, and lives spent trying to return to the world some sense of decency and normalcy.

At the end of our luncheon I presented a special letter from Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of President Eisenhower, to each of the Monuments Men and to one family member of Monuments Men now deceased. I also presented one to Lynn. Without her role, we might never have known about the heroes we call the "Monuments Men."



## *The Rape of Europa* to premiere in New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles

*The Rape of Europa* continues its successful theatrical run in the San Francisco Bay area, which began in mid-May. Upcoming screenings will ensure that the film qualifies for consideration by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences later this year. The film will begin its east coast premiere in New York City on August 24th!

As final release dates for other cities become available, they will be posted on the film's website [www.therapeofeuropa.com](http://www.therapeofeuropa.com).

## Lotos Club Event

by *Robert M. Edsel*

On June 18th I was honored to be the guest speaker at the Lotos Club in New York City. Started in 1870 as a literary club, the club counted Mark Twain among its early members. More than a fourth of the Club's membership was in attendance for the lecture and lovely dinner which followed in their beautiful and historic building on East 66th Street. Events such as these serve as constant reminders that the degrees of separation from one person to another are becoming fewer and fewer in our world today. I met a number of people with personal connections to this story. I was honored to be so warmly welcomed by such an interested and learned group.

### *This month we would like to thank:*

The Webster Group, Susan Eisenhower, Senators Inhofe, Kennedy, Hutchison, and Boxer, and Representatives Granger, Frelinghuysen, and Slaughter, as well as their respective staff members.

For comments on the Monuments Men Newsletter or media inquiries, please contact Elizabeth Ivy: [eivy@laurelpublishingllc.com](mailto:eivy@laurelpublishingllc.com)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- University of Tennessee** Sept 20
- Global Creative Leadership Summit** Sept 23-25  
Rockefeller University, New York City
- Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art** Sept 27

### THEATRICAL OPENING DATES

- Sacramento**  
Crest Theater August 3
- Santa Cruz**  
The Nickelodeon Theater August 10
- Monterey**  
Osio Cinema August 10
- New York City**  
Angelika Film Center August 24
- Los Angeles**  
Laemmle Theater August 24
- Boston**  
Coolidge Corner Theater  
Landmark Kendall Square Cinema September 7
- Washington, D.C.** September 14  
Bethesda Row Cinema  
E Street Cinema
- Baltimore**  
Charles Theater September 21
- Tulsa**  
Circle Cinema October 7

### FILM SCREENINGS

- Martha's Vineyard** June 24- August 12

### FOREIGN FILM SCREENINGS

- Jerusalem Intl Film Festival** July 5-14
- Budapest Jewish Film Festival** Aug 1-4
- Argentina Jewish Film Festival** TBA