THE MONUMENTS MEN: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History by Robert M. Edsel

Walker Hancock, Lamont Moore, George Stout and two unidentified soldiers in Marburg, Germany, June 1945.

When the US entered the war in Europe, few realized that western civilization’s cultural heritage was on the brink of annihilation. Then, in the summer of 1943, President Roosevelt and General Dwight Eisenhower set out in a “race against time” to try and save Europe’s art treasures. On D-Day seven frontline artists, curators, museum directors, and sculptors were given a task that seemed insurmountable: protect every important monument the Allied forces were to encounter between the English Channel and Berlin.

Amazingly, this is an epic story of WWII that is out of the sphere of public knowledge, including the WWII War Museum that knew little of the story before the author began his research.

Hitler put plans in place as early as 1932 to systematically identify and document Europe’s art and locations for his envisioned Fuhrermuseum in Linz, Austria. Later, confiscated Jewish family treasures were cataloged, photographed and gleaned for additional objects of his choosing. Through these cataloged volumes (4 of approximately 100 have been discovered) items were easily identified; e.g. R1171 (Rothschild) and located and returned.

The stolen art exceeded 50 million objects, and an estimate of no less than 10 to 20 million items remains unrecovered. From what another author coined as “the rape of Europa”, much was and is in the hands of soldiers and citizens, taken as souvenirs, and remains in countries located all over the world. The good news is that art treasures are still being discovered and returned, the latest being in 2013.

Amazing discoveries including Hitler’s targeted Ghent Altarpiece from Belgium; which, from the beginning, he was obsessed with securing “at all cost!”

In Bavaria, Neuschwanstein Castle’s secret was revealed by the curator of Jeu de Paume Museum in Paris, who took secret notes of the art and where the pieces were taken. After vetting one of the monuments men and him winning her trust, they came to the mutual realization that both were people of destiny, each holding only half the key. The key complete, the site was revealed, secured and 60,000 works of art would be recovered for France.

In the salt mine of Altaussee Austria another unfathomable amount of treasure was discovered. Only by an act of a local Austrian hero, who dynamited the mine entrance, was the art plucked from its annihilation by a fanatic Nazi’s
interpretation of Hitler’s “Nero Decree”, destroy everything!

"Adoration of the Mystic Lamb", the Ghent Altarpiece, by Jan van Eyck was one of the most notable works found in the Altausse mine. The Ghent Altarpiece and the Bruges Madonna were returned to Belgium.

Between these two sites, most of France’s treasures survived almost intact; The Ghent Altarpiece and the Bruges Madonna were returned to Belgium.

Testimonial of two monument men:

Lincoln Kirstein said of their leader Stout, that he “was the greatest war hero of all time – he actually saved all the art that everybody else talked about.”

Deane Keller when asked was it worth it – “no, it wasn’t worth the life of an single American boy to trade for a single work of art, but risking your life for a cause is a risk that’s worth taking understanding that you could be killed.”

Walker Hancock, Lamont Moore, George Stout and two unidentified soldiers in Marburg, Germany, June 1945.

Recommended:

*Saving Italy: The Race to Rescue a Nation’s Treasures from the Nazis*, Robert M. Edsel
*The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe’s Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War*, Lynn H. Nicholas
*The Rape of Europa*, Movie available on Netflix

Learn More About Book Club:

- We choose one book per month based on member’s recommendation or if there is a specific course subject being offered we wish to know more about.
- We meet for 1 ½ hrs – Currently we are juggling our schedule to meet the needs of the members class schedule and will meet on campus after class.
- Membership – there are 12 current members. If you wish more information or want to become a member, please contact Arlene Miro, yodrmom1@verizon.net
- Want to start a club with a different venue: Mystery Writers, Current Events? The PLA team will be happy to get you started. Contact Pat O’Neil, jpoineil@roadrunner.com

The Train, Movie available on YouTube

Book Club’s Selection for March

“Science has a battle for hearts and minds on its hands: a battle on two fronts—against superstition and ignorance on one flank, and against pseudo-intellectual obscurantism on the other. How good it feels to have Lisa Randall’s unusual blend of top flight science, clarity, and charm on our side.”

Richard Dawkins

“All becomes clear in an admirable account of the hunt for the Higgs Boson”, Athené Donald, professor of experimental physics, University of Cambridge

“Dazzling ideas….Read this book today to understand the science of tomorrow.”

Steven Pinker, Harvard College Professor and Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology
Recent Road Trips

Cruising at 65 mph, visualizing Bill Garlington’s analogy of the “bubble in the bath” we revisited Siddhartha’s quest for truth and liberation from earthly suffering. We were introduced to Pure Land and Zen, the schools of Buddhism practiced at HSI LAI. Later, BJ was walking us through the 15 days of Chinese New Year celebration. In the mist of ritual and symbolic representation, we envisioned day by day a wonderful, warm, respectful and loving tradition.

Arriving was magical; pictures defy the real. Entering the Bodhisattva Hall, one is overwhelmed with the ten thousand Buddha statues, symbolic of the Buddha Nature within to serve as a reminder of the multitudes of beings who have attained enlightenment. So much beauty and tradition. As the clouds opened the guardians of the Arhat (disciples of Buddha) and Avalokitesvara (Guanyin Bodhisattva) gardens glisten and shimmered in the welcomed rain; treasures unimaginable. Symbolic and most meaningful experience was the Infinity Room (indescribable.)

Angelus Temple

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890 - 1944) Most know her name, but little of her story. However, one OLLI visitor remembers accompanying her mother to a service when she was around 6 years old; some remember their grandmothers’ stories, introduced through the radio. Aimee was an evangelist who founded the Foursquare Gospel Church. Though hugely successful a kidnapping scandal is what many remember most about her.

In 1923, the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles was built, located in then Hollywood, seating more than 5,000. Its Bible school was later to become the Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism. Born to preach Aimee became more famous than most movie stars; a minister, healer, teacher, flamboyant in appearance and disposition, she was a celebrated public figure.

The movement that Aimee Semple McPherson founded continues today.

Voices from the bus:

“I love that temple offerings are present at the salad bar.” Willa Pace

“Another super OLLI outing…” Su Part

• OLLI Day Trippers!
• Come and PLA
• May 15th at 10:00am – Noon

WELCOME TO THE US NAVY SEABEE MUSEUM

The mission of the US Navy Seabee Museum is to select, collect, preserve and display material relating to the history of the Naval Construction Force, better known as the SEABEES, and the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps.

The second oldest of the official Navy museums, the Seabee Museum was established in 1947 in
Port Hueneme, California. Today it is part of Naval Base Ventura County. During World War II, approximately 250,000 Seabees passed through the Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC), Port Hueneme, on their way to or from the Pacific Theater. Eager to get home after extended duty overseas, the Seabees left vast quantities of memorabilia and "war trophies" in Port Hueneme rather than dealing with the lengthy government paperwork required to ship them home.

June 11th at 10:00am – Noon

WELCOME TO THE MUSEUM OF VENTURA COUNTY

The Museum of Ventura County celebrates, preserves and interprets the art, history and culture of Ventura County, the California Channel Islands and the surrounding region through its collections, exhibitions, events, educational programs, publications and its research library. It also serves as a gathering place for the community

Join us for an exciting tour of the Museum of Ventura and an exclusive tour of the collection.

Registration for Day Tours can be made by calling 805-437-8583
Clearly leave your name and telephone number, and the name of the day tour. Someone will call you back to confirm.

Suggestions for future Day Tours? Please contact Arlene Miro at yodrmom1@verizon.net

UPCOMING OLLI ROAD TRIPS

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM & SILK ROAD EXHIBIT

HOST: DR. BILL GARLINGTON

Date: Saturday-April 5, 2014 Cost: $68.00 Includes:
Transportation, Tip, Water, Gratuities, Admission to the Museum and Silk Road Exhibit and Banoo, and docent tour of museum (Ticket cost of $24.00 is INCLUDED in the price.)
The coach leaves Camarillo at 8:30 AM and arrives back in Camarillo at 5:30 PM
Registration Starts 1-21-14 by calling 805-437-8583
Clearly leave your name and telephone number and someone will call you back to confirm.

Lunch on your own in the Cafe. Everything is under $10.00
Time to wander on your own
Tour is about 3.5 minutes and covers the highlights of the newly renovated Natural History Museum

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Treasures of Los Angeles

Doheny Mansion - Located at historic Chester Place, on the grounds of Mount Saint Mary's College

St. Vincent de Paul's Church

Carroll Avenue Victorian Homes

Date: Tuesday - May 6, 2014
Bus leaves Camarillo at 8:30 AM Returns at 6:00 PM
Cost: $80.00 Includes: $30.00 2-hour tour of the Doheny Mansion and garden, Transportation, Gratuity, Water, Lunch, St. Vincent de Paul's Church, Coach Cruise Viewing of Carroll Avenue with all the Victorian Homes, and Ride on Angels Flight
Lunch served at the Doheny Cafe: Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad, soft drink/water, chocolate chip cookie.
Hosted by Curt, our popular guide from the LA Reserve Trip

Registration Starts Monday 3/10/14 by calling 805-437-8583
Clearly leave your name and telephone number and someone will call you back to confirm