



Three Down, One To Go!

Another Monuments Man in the cover photo of Rescuing Da Vinci has been identified



From left to right: Monuments Men Everett Parker Lesley, Jr., Karol Estreicher, Frank Albright, and a still unidentified Seventh U.S. Army soldier. (photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.)

Selection of the photograph for the cover of *Rescuing Da Vinci* was fairly easy. What better way to tell the story than to use a photo of four soldiers, at least three of whom were Monuments Men, holding a painting by Leonardo da Vinci, outdoors, in front of a train? In fact, these heroes were returning the *Lady with an Ermine*, Leonardo's greatest portrait, to the Czartoryski Collection in Cracow, Poland in 1946, after an almost seven year absence because of its theft by Hitler and the Nazis.

At the outset we knew the man holding the painting was a Polish Monuments officer named Karol Estreicher, a professor of art and art history of national fame in his homeland. For years during and after the war, Estreicher worked tirelessly tracking down looted works of art from Poland in an attempt to protect and later recover his nation's patrimony. We also knew only the name of the man standing to his left, seen in the photo holding the white packing paper: Lt. Frank P. Albright. Unfortunately, it took us more than 6 months, some of which were spent working with a genealogist, to determine exactly which Frank P. Albright this man was as there were quite a few! In time, we determined that our Frank P. Albright was, after the war, the

From the Desk of Robert M. Edsel

"Be careful what you wish for..." Calls, letters, emails, inquiries of all sorts consume much of our time due in large part to the excellent program on the Monuments Men which aired on a CBS Sunday Morning segment in late January. Many who contact us have some connection to the story: a name for a heretofore unknown face, a possible looted work of art or cultural item for which they're seeking guidance, or a relative whose war experience crossed paths with a Monuments Man. These are essential elements of the mosaic we're constructing about the history of these heroes. However, oftentimes the contacts are simply someone who wants to express their support for our effort on behalf of these men and women. Those messages touch my heart.

It was my mother's wish that in lieu of flowers, friends of my father, A. Ray Edsel, would make a gift in his honor to the Monuments Men Foundation. The generosity that has followed is heart-warming. Nearly 100 gifts totaling in excess of \$14,900 have been received by the Foundation, including gifts from almost every Monuments Man and many of their family members. Words fail to convey the feelings of gratitude we all feel for the generosity of so many. My father would be beaming his biggest smile to know that his fellow World War II veterans responded in such a kind and generous way. On behalf of the Monuments Men Foundation and my family, we thank you.



esteemed museum director of the Old Salem Museums in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Two years ago, after considerable research, we thought we had identified the man on the far left of the photo, but we were unable to corroborate it with a third party. With so few living Monuments Men, in fact, so few Monuments Men ever, such confirmation is always difficult. However, last month, thanks to a generous email we received from a fellow researcher, we can now report that the Monuments Man holding the Thompson machine gun is Capt. Everett Parker “Bill” Lesley, Jr., a distinguished scholar and expert on the decorative arts. Bill accompanied these other Monuments Men on this train back to Cracow in 1946, which contained multiple car loads of irreplaceable works of art stolen from Poland and subsequently recovered by the Monuments Men, including the painting by Leonardo and the Veit Stoss altarpiece.

Our search continues to identify the fourth person in this photo, a Seventh U.S. Army soldier located on the far right holding the carbine rifle. Someone, somewhere, knows who he is. This story underscores the importance of visibility for our project as help from the public is vital to our mission. That said, we are enormously grateful for the help we recently received from Robert Newton, David Corona, and indirectly Mark Lesley, in making this important identification.

Do the Amber Panels Exist?



*The reconstructed Amber Room at Tsarskoye Selo, more commonly known as Catherine Palace, outside St. Petersburg, Russia.
(photo courtesy of the Tsarskoye Selo)*

Seemingly exciting news was reported in February from an area of Germany just across the Czech Republic border where treasure hunters have been searching for years for the lost Amber Panels. These famed wall panels were gifted by King Frederick William I of Germany to Peter the Great of Russia in 1716. Each piece of translucent brownish-yellow fossil was painstakingly hand carved and fitted by

German master craftsmen over the course of twelve years and subsequently installed in Tsarskoye Selo, or Catherine Palace as it is more commonly known in the west.

During World War II, the invading Nazis looted the panels in 1941 and eventually transported them to Königsberg Castle. They survived Allied bombing in the area in August 1944 and were about to be transferred to Saxony in January 1945 when Soviet forces stormed Königsberg. Most experts believe that the panels were destroyed by Soviet artillery during the ensuing battle, probably unknowingly. In 1997 one of several small, portable amber mosaics that hung in the room over the large and enormously heavy panels surfaced at an art market in Bremen, Germany, giving rise to stories that the panels had survived. Imprecise reporting inflated hopes that the panels were extant. Still, no other concrete evidence of their existence has surfaced.

On February 19, Peter Haustein, Mayor of Deutschneudorf, reported that his lengthy search to find the hidden storage chamber which he believed contained the Amber Panels was nearing a successful conclusion. He said that his team had located a stash



of gold bars, a key clue he had developed over many years. Out of concern for possible booby-traps in the chamber, no one had yet entered to determine its contents. Indeed, it was not uncommon for the Nazis to seal caves and other such storage facilities with explosive devices. Then suddenly, the search was suspended. As often times happens in these ventures, the "partners" may have had a falling out, at least momentarily, and that usually involves funding.

I speak with some personal experience. In 2001 I visited this area of Germany and the Czech Republic where I saw multiple "digs" taking place even then. In fact, the search for the panels has been ongoing since the end of the war, most recently by treasure hunters, each convinced that he has the key piece of information, the key map, the unimpeachable source, that will lead to the hidden chamber. I met with Helmut Gaensel, who had been looking for the Amber Panels for years and was digging in the hilly, heavily wooded countryside outside Prague. His search had involved gathering information from his "sources"- former SS officials, soldiers, and other people unidentified who purportedly lived in these areas, all of whom claimed to have secret information about the whereabouts of the panels. His story seemed fascinating, exciting, epic.



Helmut Gaensel, in the light colored jacket, examining an access point to one of the many holes he has drilled in search of the Amber Panels. (photo courtesy of Robert M. Edsel)



An old mine entrance near the excavation sites. (photo courtesy of Robert M. Edsel)

Gaensel and his team were drilling a hole to connect with a tunnel he believed contained the panels. The drilling rig was a bit smaller than the type of rig used to drill a water well. He proceeded to tell me about a number of other holes he had drilled which had yielded minor trinkets such as German Lugar pistols, gas canisters, and other non-commercial items. While I was convinced he was convinced, I became more and more skeptical about the endeavor for several reasons, not the least of which was the sheer magnitude of the undertaking. There were hundreds if not thousands of little gullies and hills in a vast expanse of land in which items of size could be buried that would never be found without a massive, hugely expensive and seemingly random undertaking. Even then, it made looking for a needle in a haystack seem like a desirable choice by comparison.

So the mystery of those remarkable panels remains unsolved if they are extant, or the treasure hunters searching for them will continue if they are not. Hope is a powerful and intoxicating motive to keep searching for something so unique and valuable, but it must be balanced with reason, information, and facts. "*Che vediamo*" the Italians say (We'll see!).



Monuments Men Foundation Update

The Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art is a not-for-profit IRS approved 501(c)(3) entity created to raise public awareness of the 345 or so men and women from thirteen nations who protected monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. These heroes of civilization subsequently tracked, located and restituted to the victims of the greatest theft in history more than 5 million artistic and cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis.

The Foundation exists to preserve the rich legacy of the Monuments Men by putting to use the lessons learned about the protection of cultural treasures during armed conflict. **The protection of cultural treasures wins over the hearts and minds of indigenous people which in turn not only saves lives, but engenders good will between nations.** The Monuments Men Foundation also continues the work of the Monuments Men by helping to locate and return some of the hundreds of thousands of still missing works of art and documents worth billions of dollars. It is a continuation of the world's greatest treasure hunt.

In 2008 the Monuments Men Foundation is focused on building its Board of Directors, an essential element to creating a meaningful and lasting organization. Increased funding for its activities remains an ongoing priority. The current leadership of the Monuments Men Foundation and its small but dedicated team is noted below. Further details, including biographies of each director, may be found on the Foundation's website.

Board of Directors and Officers

Title

Robert M. Edsel	Director and President
Allen E. Cullum	Director
R. Thomas Schwartz	Director
Karen Evans	Director of Administration and Corporate Secretary

Employees

Position

Patricia Teter	Chief Provenance Researcher
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Monuments Man Capt. Everett Parker Lesley, Jr. (1913-1982)



“Bill” Lesley was one of the few Monuments Men attached to forward armies when he was assigned as Monuments Officer for the 15th U.S. Army in February 1945. In this role, Lesley inspected monuments and repositories across Belgium and Germany. Following World War II, he was assigned to several military government posts including Frankfurt and Bad Nauheim. From 1946-47, he was Chief of the Restitution Branch in the Office of Military Government for Greater Hesse, Germany. In April 1946, he accompanied a restitution train from Nuremberg to Cracow, Poland. The shipment included some of the most significant artworks stolen from Poland during the war, such as the *Veit Stoss* altarpiece from the Church of Our Lady, Cracow,

and Leonardo’s *Lady with an Ermine*, from the Czartoryski collection. In 1945, Lesley helped compose – and later signed – the Wiesbaden Manifesto, a document that formally objected to the American government’s decision to transport for safekeeping 202 German-owned works of art to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Lesley was a distinguished scholar and expert on the decorative arts. Prior to the war, Lesley earned degrees at Stanford (B.A. in Classical Literature) in 1934 and Princeton (M.F.A. in Art and Archaeology) in 1937. From 1939-42, he was a Professor at the University of Minnesota. After the war, Lesley studied at New York University and then, in 1950, he was Curator of Exhibitions at Cooper Union Museum in New York. Also in the early 1950s, Lesley was Acting Director at the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences (later Chrysler Museum of Art) in Norfolk, Virginia, as well as Professor of Art at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. From 1959-79, Lesley was Professor of Art at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, where he was later made Professor Emeritus. From 1974-76, he was Curator of Decorative Arts at the National

Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

For his restitution efforts during and after World War II, Lesley was awarded the Chevalier, Order of Poland Restored (Polinia Restituta), and the Honorary Medal of Art and Science, House of Orange-Nassau (Orde van Oranje-Nassau), The Netherlands. He donated some of his papers, comprised of documents and photographs related to his MFAA service, to the National Gallery of Art in Washington in 1979. The E. Parker Lesley, Jr. Papers are today conserved in the Gallery Archives. Additionally, the Papers of Everett Parker Lesley are held at the Old Dominion University Perry Library, Special Collections in Norfolk, Virginia.



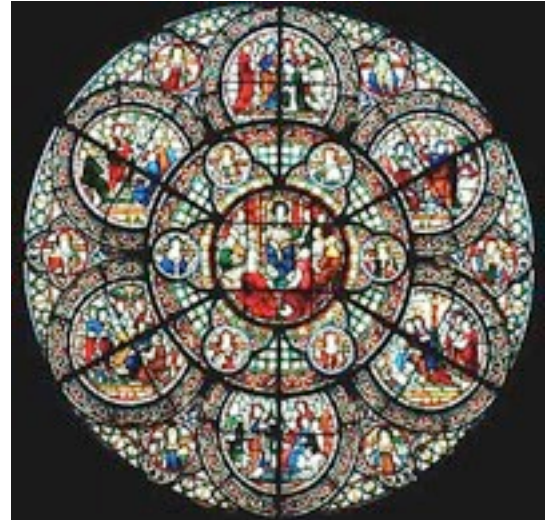
*Lesley at the return of Leonardo’s *Lady with an Ermine*. (photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.)*



Return of St. Mary's Church Stained Glass from Russia

Relations between Russia and Germany have been extremely challenged in the arena of cultural restitution of looted works of art during World War II. This is a highly emotionally charged subject due to the horrific losses of the Soviet Union, estimated to be as many as 25 million people. While some point out that the Hague Convention makes no provision for any country to keep such artifacts as compensation for war losses, those who framed the convention could not have foreseen that one nation could be so thoroughly devastated and destroyed as Russia was during the War. The problem of how to deal with this situation is but another example of the altered legacy left us by Hitler and the Nazis.

Recently, Russia's lower house of Parliament (the State Duma) approved the return of six stained glass windows to St. Mary's Church, Marienkirche, in Frankfurt-upon-Oder, Germany. These windows had been housed in Moscow's Pushkin Museum. This followed the return in 2002 by Russia of 111 stained glass panels to the church which had been stored at the Hermitage Museum and, at the time, were thought to be all of the stained glass windows in Russia's possession. No doubt the precedent established in the earlier return made this recent decision easier, but this restitution still marks a sign of progress.



One of the returned stained glass windows from St. Mary's Church in Frankfurt-upon-Oder.

Behind the Scenes: "Angels"

by Robert M. Edsel

Many people have helped us in the telling of this great story and each of its component parts. Our success is the sum total of those acts of generosity, expressions of good will, and shared determination to make this story known to all. Too often these essential "angels" are not seen by the public, yet they are no less deserving of praise. In each issue I intend on mentioning the names of some of our "angels." Each knows what they've done to help us. To all of them, mentioned or not, we say "thank you." The Monuments Men and their families are eternally appreciative.

This month we would like to thank:

Robert Newton, David Corona, Mark Lesley, Arlette Quervel, Steve Glauber, and Remington Korper.

To subscribe to the monthly version of the *Monuments Men Newsletter*, or to provide us with comments, please contact Elizabeth Ivy: eivy@laurelpublishingllc.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

ROBERT M. EDSSEL
SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Yale University
Ritchie Lecture Series
April 17, 2008

McNay Art Museum
San Antonio, TX
May 1, 2008

**Andrews Kurth, LLP
Restitution Conference**
Washington, D.C.
April 24, 2008

El Paso Holocaust Museum
El Paso, TX
September 24, 2008

Oklahoma City Town Hall
November 14, 2008