

Robert M. Edsel

Robert M. Edsel has lived four clearly defined and successful careers in his 62 years. An innate curiosity and love of learning are the connective thread from his beginnings as a nationally ranked tennis player, to building a leading oil and gas exploration business that pioneered the use of horizontal drilling technology, to his achievements as a #1 *New York Times* Bestselling author, and his lifelong philanthropic work, most recently through the Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art. Excellence, innovation, and integrity have been common elements in each of his endeavors.

Businessman

In 1979, after earning a B.A. in Finance from Southern Methodist University, Robert worked as an administrative assistant to an independent oilman. Three years later he struck out on his own. Over time, his company, Gemini Exploration, pioneered the use of horizontal drilling technology. By 1995 and the sale of the company to Union Pacific Resources, Gemini had become the second most active driller of horizontal wells in the United States. Robert spent the next year making certain that every one of his employees had jobs before ceasing operations. The following year he moved to Europe with his family, living in Paris and Florence for five years. He now resides in Dallas, Texas.

During Robert's sixteen-year career in the exploration business, success depended on assessing risk and successfully negotiating hundreds of transactions, both buying and selling assets. While an entrepreneur at heart, he has also served as a director of an international construction aggregate company, through multiple iterations of raising private equity, and ultimately a publicly listed company. No fan of hype, Robert leads by example constantly emphasizing the importance of "under promising, and over delivering."

Author

In 1996, while living in Florence, Italy, what began as a question--- "*How, during the most destructive war in history, did so many of the world's great cultural treasures survive, and who were the people that saved them?*"---evolved into an impassioned journey to tell the story of the men and women who were instrumental in saving much of civilization's most treasured artistic and cultural achievements. Rejected by the publishing industry, he had to self-publish his first book about the scholar-soldiers now known as the Monuments Men, *Rescuing Da Vinci* (2007).

His second book, the #1 *New York Times* bestseller, ***The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*** (2009), has been translated into more than 30 languages with almost 1,000,000 copies in print. His follow-on book, ***Saving Italy: The Race to Rescue a Nation's Treasures from the Nazis*** (2013), was also a *New York Times* bestseller. His fourth book, ***The Greatest Treasure Hunt in History: The Story of the Monuments Men*** (2019), introduces these heroes' story to the Young Adult audience.

Robert is the co-producer of the Emmy-nominated documentary film, ***The Rape of Europa*** (2006) and the Executive Producer and on-air host of ***Hunting Nazi Treasure*** (2018), an eight-part investigative documentary television series that is currently broadcast on Discovery's *American Heroes Network* and other major broadcasters in Canada and Europe. He also served as a consultant to Academy Award winner George Clooney during script-writing and production of the film, ***The Monuments Men*** (2014), based on his second book. In addition to Clooney, the film starred Matt Damon, Bill Murray, Cate Blanchett, Jean Dujardin, and Hugh Bonneville. Robert has testified before Congress as one of the world's leading experts on art looted during World War II. He has been a guest on nearly every national, and many international, television and radio programs including multiple appearances on *CBS Sunday Morning*, *The Charlie Rose Show*, *CNN*, *BBC World News*, *NPR*, *C-SPAN*, and all three major domestic television networks. *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, among many other publications, have extensively covered his work.

Nine years ago, Robert recommended to the Board of Trustees of the National World War II Museum that they recreate a salt mine in some future building that would tell the story of the Monuments Men. In October 2019, the Museum broke ground on the final building of its \$500 million campus, the Liberation Pavilion, which will house the **Monuments Men Gallery**, one of the Museum's signature permanent exhibitions. The Museum, ranked the third most popular museum in the United States by TripAdvisor, receives more than 750,000 visitors annually. Robert continues to serve as a consultant to the Museum on the design of the exhibition.

Philanthropist

In 2007, Robert founded the **Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art**, (www.monumentsmenfoundation.org), a not-for-profit organization created to honor the work of these heroes of civilization. The Foundation has also played a leading role in the discovery of more than thirty priceless works of art and cultural treasures missing since the end of the war, all of which have been returned to their

rightful owners. Late that year, during a ceremony held in the East Room of The White House, President George W. Bush awarded the Foundation the **National Humanities Medal** for its sustained efforts to identify and recognize the contributions of the Monuments Men. The National Humanities Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the United States for excellence in the Humanities. In 2014, after eight years of advocacy, the Monuments Men Foundation succeeded in gaining passage of Congressional legislation awarding the Monuments Men and Women the **Congressional Gold Medal**, our nation's highest civilian honor. Mr. Edsel worked closely with officials from the U.S. Mint and their team of artists on the design of the medal. On October 22, 2015, at a ceremony in Emancipation Hall, the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, leaders of both parties in the House and the Senate, and Mr. Edsel presented the Congressional Gold Medal to the Monuments Men and Women of all fourteen nations. In her introduction of Robert, Democratic Minority leader Nancy Pelosi referred to him as "our hero."

Public Speaker

Robert is a highly sought and dynamic public speaker, sharing stories about the Monuments Men and Women, and his personal journey in unearthing and telling their story, at museums, schools and universities, and town halls in the United States, Europe, and Japan. He has presented at the National Archives, National Gallery of Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum, National World War II Museum, Yale University, Getty Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, Eisenhower Presidential Library, and more recently the Vatican (Rome), Accademia (Florence) and Brera Museum (Milan), among many others. His multi-media presentations have enthralled audiences totaling more than 60,000 people.

Since 2016, Robert has donated time to meet with men and women in uniform serving in the U.S. Army Civil Affairs Division who today perform many of the duties of the Monuments Men of World War II. In addition to attending various military briefings, Robert has delivered pro-bono presentations on base at Ft. Meade, Maryland and Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin.

Other Activities

Robert served as a Trustee of St. Mark's School of Texas and in a variety of leadership positions for nine years, from 1987-1996, when he moved to Europe. In 1993, he founded the Cochran Chapel Homeowners Association in Dallas, serving as President for the first three years. In 2003, he served as Chairman of a committee working to develop a master plan for the Turtle Creek corridor in Dallas. It now serves as the City's master plan for the Turtle Creek greenbelt. Robert has also served on the Advisory Board of the Meadows Museum of Art in

Dallas, and the American Friends of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

While living in Italy, he was a founding Board Member of Friends of Florence. In addition to writing the group's by-laws, he also served as Vice President for the first two years. Robert is still involved with the group and serves on its Council of Honorary Advisors.

Major Awards

2008 President's Call to Service Award

Presented to individuals by the President of the United States' Council on Service and Civic Participation, in recognition and appreciation of their commitment to strengthening the Nation and for making a difference through volunteer service.

2008 Hope for Humanity Award

Presented to individuals by the Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance, in recognition of their dedication to promoting tolerance, education, and understanding, and to reducing prejudice.

2011 Texas Medal of Arts Award

Inspired by the National Medal of Arts, it is awarded to Texas leaders and luminaries in the arts and entertainment industry for creative excellence and exemplary talents.

2011 St. Mark's School of Texas Distinguished Alumnus Award

Recognizes achievement of exceptional nature in any field, vocational or voluntary, covering an entire career.

2014 Lifetime Achievement Award

Presented to individuals by the National Council for the Promotion of Italian Language in American Schools, in recognition of their research, passion and commitment to the preservation of Italian Art and Culture.

2014 Records of Achievement Award

Presented by the Foundation for the National Archives, in recognition of individuals whose work has fostered a broader national awareness of the history and identity of the United States through the use of original records. Past recipients include Stephen Spielberg, Ken Burns, Tom Brokaw, David McCullough, and Tom Hanks.

2015 Anne Frank Human Writes Award

Presented by the Anne Frank Center USA to writers who have proven themselves to be exceptional leaders in combating the sort of intolerance, prejudice and injustice that Anne Frank and so many others faced.

2017 Honorary Member of the U.S. Army's 88th Infantry Division

Presented by the 88th Infantry Division in recognition of dedicated support of the Blue Devil's Centennial Celebration.

2019 Pio Alferano Service to the Arts Award

This award, named in honor of the founder of Italy's Carabinieri Cultural Heritage Protection Unit, is presented for distinguished service to the arts.