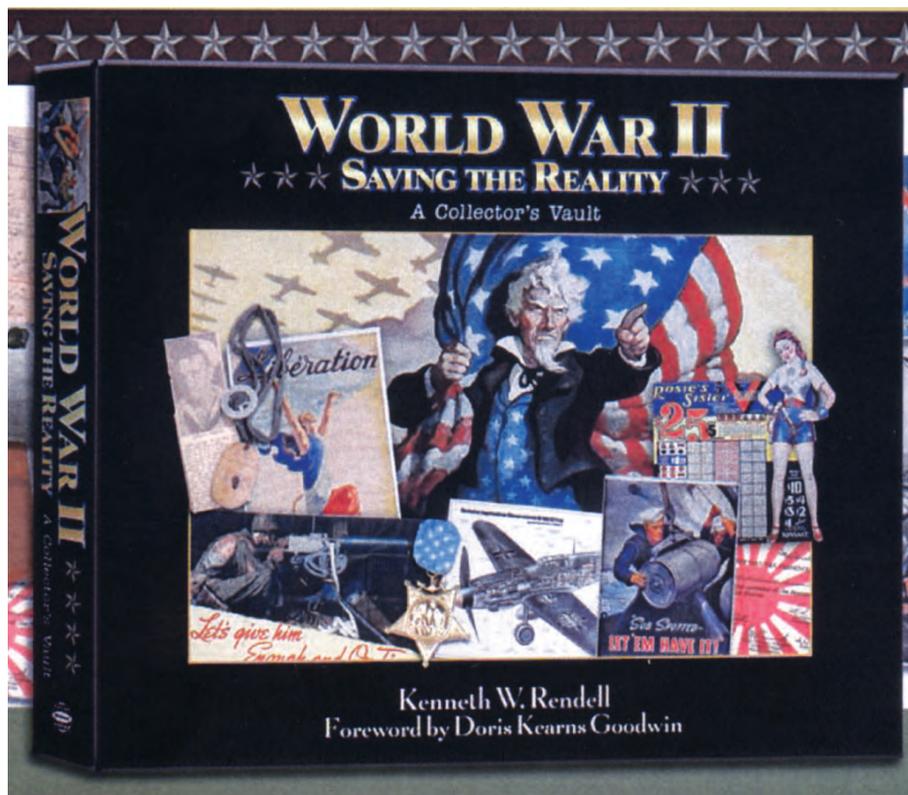


## Noted Dealer's WW2 Collection Comes to Life



RENDALL, Kenneth W. *World War II: Saving the Reality—A Collector's Vault*. Foreword by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2009. Small 4to. Hardbound, slipcase. 144pp. Numerous color illustrations and inserts. \$49.95.

**W**IZARD OLOGY . . . *Dragonology... Pirates... Titanic...* parents and grandparents are sure to be familiar with these and other thick oversize nonfiction books on fadish topics that have become mainstays for young adults in recent years. Heavily laden with facsimiles of all sizes attached in a variety of imaginative ways (envelope, foldout, pop-up, string, etc.), these spinoffs of the traditional kids' pop-up book make us all wish we were nine again so we too could indulge.

Well, we can, for dealer Kenneth Rendell's *World War II: Saving the Reality—A Collector's Vault* is precisely such a book—for adults. Issued in conjunction with the opening of the Museum of World War II in Natick, Mass., this museum and book highlight Rendell's unparalleled personal collection of World War II artifacts, gathered over the course of several decades. As he notes in his preface, "The goal is to surround the visitor with all the elements a person in World War II in that particular area would have

seen, read, touched, smelled, experienced... Everything in the museum is original—there are no reproductions and everything, with rare exceptions, was produced during or before the war." For those who can't make it to Natick to visit this exciting new undertaking, *World War II: Saving the Reality* makes as good a substitute as can be imagined.

Each of the 20 brief chapters features concise, informative text with numerous

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artfully arranged and beautifully photographed artifacts. Some of which are contained in open-end sleeves or taped on with artificially-aged masking tape to give a casual "scrapbook feel." Each chapter also includes a handy timeline listing major events in chronological order.

The autographs, though—*ah, the autographs!* Such autographs as *World War II* buffs fantasize about... *dream about... pray* may come their way before they die. Not to give short shrift to the mind-blowing array of three-dimensional artifacts with which the book is bulging, but let's face it: The letters, documents, signed images and other paper that peppers these pages are what really stir the blood of most of us.

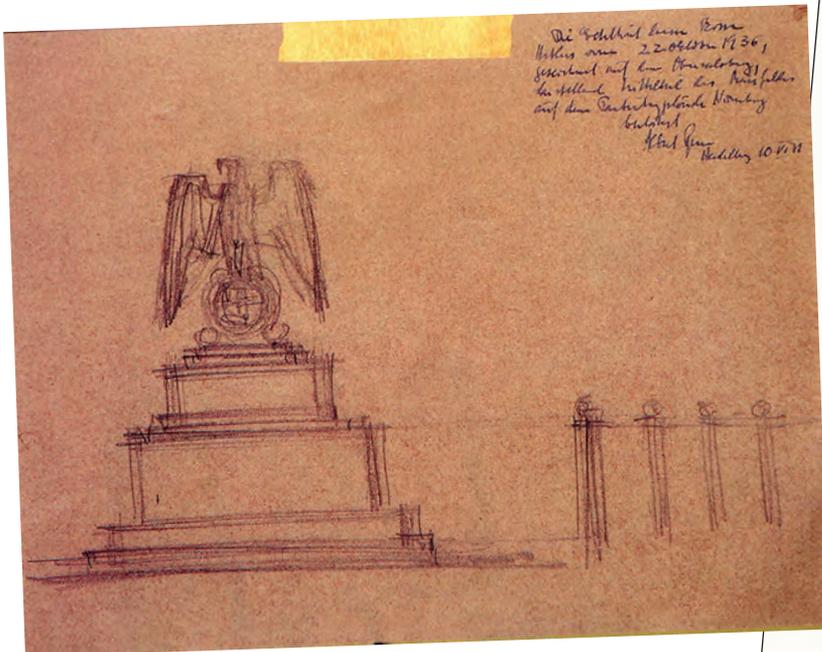
The loose or attached facsimiles are superbly done, as are the traditional text illustrations. Whenever possible they appear to be life-size, and on paper simulating the original—all have the word "Reproduction" printed on the verso. Facsimiles of patriotic postcards or posters appear on a slick heavy gauge stock, while facsimiles of correspondence appear on thick stock imitating the originals. Such attention to detail won't be lost on discriminating collectors.

"The Rise of Nazism," for instance, depicts a catchy color pencil sketch—"Hitler's sketch of the Nazi Party banner"—while attached to the same page is a larger rough pencil sketch, "Hitler's sketch of the eagle for the Party Square in Nuremberg, with an authentication written and signed by his architect, Albert Speer."

The meaty "U.S. Military" chapter made my heart skip a beat with Patton's personal copy of Hitler's *My Battle* which contains the general's notes and an incredible Patton letter of 1907 to his father bemoaning the development of machine guns, the effect of which "so ruined the beauty of war."

"Absolutely stunning" is how I'd describe a book shown in the "Prisoners of War" chapter. What I mistook for the handsome pictorial dust jacket of a book I'd never encountered—H.M. Lowe's *Memoirs of Sagan*—is actually the *hand-painted front cover* of this soldier's handwritten diary chronicling life as a POW in Stalag III.

Personal favorite facsimiles would include a three-page ALS of 1944 from



Left: Hitler's sketch of the eagle for the Party Square in Nuremberg • A fine war-date portrait of Eisenhower with a lengthy inscription to Kay Summersby

Eisenhower to wife Mamie featuring poignant commentary on the nature of war—wickedly paired with a fine war-date portrait of Ike with a lengthy inscription to Kay Summersby, Ike's wartime chauffeur and secretary and alleged mistress.

Not to overlook mention of the staggering quality and variety of non-autographs, let's visit just one example. "Resistance" is a crowd-pleasing chapter, with examples of counterfeiting, sabotage and spy tools. The English camera so small it fits into a matchbox, coins with attached blades that swivel out, a cigarette lighter and pipe capable of shooting bullets, a belt buckle that doubles as a compass, pencils that explode—real life James Bond stuff. And in the same chapter is the "Black Propaganda" section, which Rendell describes as "information, printed or broadcast by radio, that appears to come from one source—a government, usually—but actually originates from the enemy, with the intent to demoralize, confuse, or vilify." He goes on:

*The British took black propaganda to levels never seen before, or since. They faked everything: not just currency, ration stamps, and books; they faked German newspapers, wanted posters, and literature. They even faked notices sent to German families announcing the death of their loved ones in combat....*

These are random examples of select artifacts and represent but a fraction of the relics Rendell so discriminately gathered. Choice as they are individually, they fail to

convey the powerful overall impact of *World War II: Saving the Reality*. A book so heavily reliant on visual impact can only be properly appreciated through old-fashioned in-person reading and browsing.

Collectors interested in specific facets of Rendell's collection will appreciate a nifty *For the Collector and Historian* sidebar that appears in the lower right corner of many pages. These handy snippets offer straightforward advice, observations, cautions and warnings to those interested in gathering the subject matter of that particular chapter. Of Nazi Germany artifacts he remarks: "Generally speaking this is a very treacherous area to collect, because of the large number of fakes and forgeries. Any pieces claiming to have been associated with major personalities, particularly Hitler, need to be accompanied by very direct proof. It is not just modern forgers that are the problem—soldiers' stories became embellished over the years as to where they found things. Hitler himself added to the problem by having extremely well executed lithographic signatures on many documents and letters."

Although it's not generally the domain



Barham's and To 'Iris': with deep appreciation for loyal, efficient and devoted service in the 2. Lt. and officer, and with the appreciation regard of her friend & officer - 1943.

of book reviewers to comment on a book's future (other than bestseller potential, that is), this dealer finds himself worried about the fate of Rendell's *World War II* years down the road from a purely physical perspective. These oversize thick-paged volumes loaded with loose inserts don't age well. Frequent turning of the heavy pages inevitably make the book's binding what us bibliopoles call "shaken," the heavy pockets affixed to many pages tend to bend or tear those pages and some of the loose inserts invariably get lost or damaged. The slipcase does help to preserve the volume and prevent these damages—sometimes.

Not too many years down the road I picture booksellers describing a copy as scarce because the binding isn't cracked and it isn't lacking any inserts.

You'll want to treat Rendell's *World War II: Saving the Reality* with care—not just to ensure that it bears up well over the years but because the wonderful *immediacy* that his outstanding illustrations lend the subject matter make this one of those volumes you want to hang onto and return to again and again. **A**