Mother of Normandy:
The Story of Madame Simone Renaud

This two-hour documentary explores a timeless story of one French woman’s devotion to more than 15,000 American soldiers and their families. Uncovering this story inspired the people of Locust Valley, New York, to rekindle a broken bond between two countries and resurrect the mission of Operation Democracy.
This is the story of one remarkable woman, whose devotion to a generation of heroes transcended all boundaries.

Madame Simone Renaud witnessed the liberation of France on June 6, 1944 from a unique vantage point—the small town of Sainte Mere Eglise—the drop point for the 101st and 82nd airborne divisions of the United States Army.

It was here, in her small home town that she, along with her three young sons and husband, the mayor of Sainte Mere Eglise, watched the triumph and tragedy unfold during a day that defined history. And it was here that so many American soldiers, who gave their lives to protect freedom and democracy, found their final resting place.

Madame Renaud spent a lifetime tending to the graves of those American soldiers and corresponding with their loved ones back home. She became friend, family and touchstone to those whose lives were forever changed by D-Day.

The mark she left is indelible. Her story is too.
What began as an accidental discovery during a pre-interview conversation became the impetus for one community’s philanthropic mission. Producer Doug Stebleton mentioned a recent visit with friends in Locust Valley, New York. Maurice Renaud, youngest son of Madame Renaud, said, “I know of this Locust Valley! They are our friends!”

Maurice explained the gifts he and the others in the town received from this far away city in America; candy, shoes, clothing, and toys. “Locust Valley was our Santa Claus,” he exclaimed.

Back in America, Doug called his friends, Douglas and Cathy Soref, and told them about his conversation. After many hours of searching the archives in the Locust Valley Library, Ms. Soref collected dozens of articles and photos of Operation Democracy. It appeared that in 1947, Martha Ferguson Breasted formed Operation Democracy in efforts to restore European communities recovering from the war.

Operation Democracy caught on in the United States and spread like wildfire. A booklet published in 1952 listed dozens of participating American cities and their adopted towns, including Bedford, New York; Council Bluffs, Iowa and Bloomfield, Nebraska who adopted Bedford, England; Metz, France and Kamen, Germany respectively. The booklet also contained quotes from many dignitaries such as General Douglas MacArthur, Eleanor Roosevelt and Nelson A. Rockefeller—all praising the work of this fine organization.

*Mother of Normandy* explores Operation Democracy at its roots in 1947 and celebrates its rebirth nearly sixty years later.
Madame Renaud’s spirit of compassion, bound by her service to the fallen, united two countries once separated by political differences and cultural misunderstanding. The uncovering of her story during the making of the documentary, *Mother of Normandy*, has already moved one community in Locust Valley, New York, to take action.

Never has there been a time in American history where the bond between France and the United States has been so tested by political conflict as it is today. This film demonstrates the deep roots of love and admiration felt by many French people for their American brothers.

Many see this film as an opportunity to teach the younger generation a new story from the war years—a story of heroism, of selflessness and gratitude. Educators will want to see this film in every school library in America.

Still many others believe this film could act as a healing salve to the deep wounds affecting current relations between France and America. If nothing else, it can serve as a reminder to both countries of how things used to be—when our symbol of freedom, with torch so proudly raised, was a gift from our *closest* friend.
Uncovering the Story of Madame Renaud

During filming of another documentary entitled, The M.O.T.H. Club, the producers met Bill Tucker, one of the surviving 82nd Airborne Paratroopers who landed that fateful night in Sainte Mere Eglise. During that interview, Maurice Renaud, son of Madame Simone Renaud walked up and greeted his friend, Bill. It was at this moment that the story of Madame Simone Renaud began its year-and-a-half long journey of discovery—the American friends, rare photographs, tattered letters and discovery of Operation Democracy. This featurette follows that story.

The Making of Mother of Normandy

This is a behind-the-scenes look at the film’s extensive production and post-production processes. We explore many aspects of the filmmaking process, including the integral part computer-generated visual effects play in telling the story. From interviews with the producers, special effects artists and sound designers to detailed demonstrations of how the graves of Sainte Mere Eglise were digitally re-created, we explain how the magic of visual effects enhances this timeless story.

Operation Democracy

This featurette begins on Thanksgiving Day in 1947, when Martha Ferguson Breasted along with the citizens of Locust Valley, New York, made the decision to adopt a sister town in France—one Sainte Mere Eglise. This was the beginning of Operation Democracy, which expanded as many cities around the country adopted communities abroad, helping them recover from the ravages of war. Decades later, we see new life breathed into this organization as Locust Valley once again picks up the torch.

The Liberation of Sainte Mere Eglise

World War II Military Historian, Wilbur Jones, Jr., walks us through the fateful day of June 6th, 1944. From the hours leading up to Operation Overlord to the eminent dangers of such a risky landing—both on the beaches of Normandy and the small town of Sainte Mere Eglise—Mr. Jones completes this picture of war with brilliant clarity.
The *Mother of Normandy* documentary and associated enhanced content will be created with an eye on cinematic beauty and flow. An original score utilizing live orchestrations will underpin the rich and complex sound design.

Utilizing ninety hours of footage of over twenty interviews from around the world, the story will unfold through words from the Renaud sons, their nanny, the many friends of Madame Renaud, the soldiers who survived and the families of those who didn’t. Extensive interviews with World War II Military Historian, Wilbur Jones, Jr., will establish the historical accuracy of the film.

The landscape of the film will be peppered with original letters to and from Madame Renaud, hearing the desperate words of grieving parents or comforting support of the dear Madame. Dramatic readings of those letters will add authenticity, giving life to their printed words.

Over 2,000 photos, many never before seen, were collected during the making of the film. Although it is impossible to include them all in the documentary, many will find their way in the companion book and in the DVD’s enhanced content.

Beautifully filmed re-enactments will follow Madame Renaud as she makes her journey to the gravesides of the fallen Americans, entertains the surviving veterans and sits at her desk, typing late into the night. Through computer visual effects, we will see the cemeteries as they once were—re-created as a sea of wooden crosses set against the open farmland.

*Mother of Normandy* will not only bear witness to an incredible untold story, but will do so with elegance and style.
**Production Team**

*Mother of Normandy*, the enhanced DVD content and the coffee-table book will be produced in a partnership between Doug Stebleton of Kid Gloves Productions and Mickey Corcoran of Plastic Cow Productions. Their combined efforts culminate in a company called Reminiscent Films, Inc.

**Producer/Director/Music Supervisor, Doug Stebleton**
Mr. Stebleton is Co-Founder and CEO of Kid Gloves Music and Kid Gloves Productions. A music industry veteran since 1987, his background ranges from songwriting and music publishing to story creation and television and film production. Kid Gloves Music is a successful music licensing company with credits in shows such as ER, Desperate Housewives, West Wing and movies such as Bewitched, Mean Girls, Shall We Dance and Scary Movie 3.

**Producer/Director/Effects Supervisor, Mickey Corcoran**
Mr. Corcoran is CEO of Plastic Cow, Inc. An experienced producer since 1984, his background is in television production and visual design. Plastic Cow is a successful production company, specializing in television series, web development and promo, trailer and commercial production. Their clients include, Disney Channel, Warner Brothers, Buena Vista Home Entertainment and Fox Television.

**Writer, April Moskowitz**
Ms. Moskowitz is Senior Writer for Plastic Cow’s promotions production division. In addition to her multiple film and television writing credits, Ms. Moskowitz assisted in the development and production of multiple feature films for film director Ivan Reitman and worked as a freelance script consultant for DreamWorks Studios and several other studios and production companies.

**Cinematographer, Raul Marin**
Mr. Marin is an award-winning cinematographer with credits on A&E Biography, BBC, History Channel, National Geographic Channel, PBS, ABC, CBS, NBC and more.

**Editor, Cary Cremidas**
Mr. Cremidas is an award-winning editor whose projects include movies, commercials, documentaries, television and still photography for such clients as Sony Pictures, Universal Studios, The Learning Channel and PBS.

**Composer, Geoff Levin**
Mr. Levin is a multi-award winning songwriter, composer, arranger, and musician, amassing over 5,000 individual credits. His music can be found in ER, Friends, The Sopranos, Mad About You and many, many others, including the critically-acclaimed documentary *Last Mysteries of the Titanic* with James Cameron.
In addition to entering the many film festivals on the circuit, *Mother of Normandy* is destined for distribution in several media. Trimmed for broadcast in the United States and Europe, this documentary will also have an extended play version available on DVD, complete with enhanced content. As a companion to the DVD, a large coffee table book will utilize the more than 2,000 historic photos acquired during the making of the film. Many of these photos have never been seen before.

The domestic cable networks most suited for this content would include, The History Channel, The Military Channel, National Geographic Channel, BBC America, HBO, and A&E.

The international broadcast distribution would include, BBC, Channels 4 & 5 in the United Kingdom as well as dubbed or subtitled in for French television stations.

DVD/book sales will be promoted during each broadcast, where possible, and in separate per-inquiry commercials and half-hour infomercials.

The companion book and DVD could be available in stores such as Borders, Barnes and Noble, Target, and Walmart.

The motherofnormandy.com website will serve as a portal for information as well as a vehicle for DVD and book sales.

And lastly, in the event theater distribution becomes an option, the film could be placed in small theaters worldwide.
The *Mother of Normandy* project has been approved for fiscal sponsorship by the International Documentary Association of Los Angeles (IDA) (www.documentary.org). The producers are starting the post-production phase of the project and are looking for tax-deductable donations to complete the film.

Many films and filmmakers sponsored by the IDA have received prestigious awards, including Oscar® nominations and awards, and have secured distribution and broadcast deals.

The entire *Mother of Normandy* project falls under the umbrella of IDA’s 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All private foundations, government agencies, companies or individual donor wishing to donate to the project will receive a tax deduction for their donation.

IDA will not infringe on the content or creative aspects of the project, but is legally responsible for the funds received on behalf of the project and will insure that the funds are used for charitable activities and that all donor reporting requirements are met.

Among the strict requirements necessary to be accepted by IDA, the *Mother of Normandy* producers were required to demonstrate competence in their medium, a strong commitment to and personal involvement in the project, and sound fundraising and distribution strategies.

Tax deductible donations are graciously accepted. Make checks payable to IDA and mail to:

International Documentary Association  
Attn: Mother of Normandy Sponsorship  
1201 West 5th Street M320  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
213-534-3600 (fax: 213-534-3610)

*Please write Mother of Normandy in the memo section of the check.*
March 6, 2006

Re: Mother of Normandy

By: Doug Stebleton & Mickey Corcoran

Dear Sir or Madame,

This is to advise you that Doug Stebleton & Mickey Corcoran, the above referenced members of the International Documentary Association, have been accepted into our Fiscal Sponsorship Program. We are to act as their fiscal sponsor in applying for the grant from you to make their non-fiction film.

On behalf of the International Documentary Association, I would like to urge you to support Mother of Normandy. We are pleased to sponsor this project for two reasons: the filmmakers have demonstrated high professional standards and the project promises to be a contribution to both the media arts and cultural history. We also found the budget to be entirely feasible.

The International Documentary Association has been in existence since 1982, and for some time has allowed members to use its 501(c)(3) status in applying for grants to agencies who require such status. We have agreed to act in that capacity in this instance. The International Documentary Association will administer any funds received in support of this project. Donations to the IDA are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

We look forward to working with you and appreciate your time in reviewing the application for Doug Stebleton & Mickey Corcoran’s Mother of Normandy.

Very truly yours,

Sandra Ruch
Executive Director

03/06/06

Date Signed

Sandra Ruch
January 26, 2006

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter in support of Doug Stebleton’s historical documentary *Mother of Normandy*. Mr. Stebleton first contacted the Theodore Roosevelt Association in October 2005 while conducting research for his project. After a passionate explanation of what he wished to convey in the film, which in part includes the heroic actions of Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. during the invasion of Normandy, we allowed Mr. Stebleton access to our library and other resources. Since that time he has visited us on a number of occasions. He also conducted several interviews for the film with historians associated with our organization as well as with members of the Roosevelt family. It is in this regard that I have witnessed firsthand the professionalism with which Mr. Stebleton has proceeded in recreating and reproducing this important and heart-stirring story.

As a professor of US history on the university level and a former high school social studies teacher, I anticipate that *Mother of Normandy* will be a significant educational tool as it provides a very human element to two momentous events of the twentieth century—the Second World War and American-European relations during the Cold War. As the Executive Director of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, a non-profit historical society and public service organization, I recognize the implications that the film has for student and community civic involvement. The film is especially vital to the rebirth of “Operation Democracy” a grass-roots program originated in the aftermath of 1945 that provided assistance to towns in war-torn France.

Most importantly, the film *Mother of Normandy* serves to remind us all that in the darkest times it is those who reach out to help others, even those they may never meet, that can make the greatest difference in the lives of people and nations.

Sincerely yours,

John Staudt, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Theodore Roosevelt Association
February 7, 2006

I write this letter of support for Doug Stebleton’s documentary, “Mother of Normandy.” My response to this film is analytical and visceral, global and local, educational and personal. Its power is in its ability to inform as well as to create a textured response.

In an age where the global village is presented in slogans rather than human stories, this documentary puts human faces on conflict and connection. In a world where acts of kindness are promoted but not sustained, “Mother of Normandy” speaks humbly yet forcefully about the power of example. In an age of “isms” heroism has lost its patina, and this documentary reminds us that concern for others is an attitude which gets polished through action, and each of us holds the cloth.

As an educator, I understand the teaching power of history. “Mother of Normandy” holds simple truths of the past to help us define the future.

Stephen H. Watters
Headmaster