



News Release

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Madonna Student and Professor Featured in Upcoming PBS Documentary

LIVONIA, Mich. – Madonna University graduate student Phil Naud and history professor Roger Crownover help bring history to life in the PBS documentary “Voices of a Never Ending Dawn.” The film premieres Saturday, May 23 at White Chapel Cemetery, in Troy, Mich., with public screenings on Monday, May 25, 12:30 and 3:30 p.m., as well as Sunday, June 14, 2 p.m. The show will air on PBS in the near future.

The two-hour documentary depicts the story of the World War I Polar Bears – a group of 5,500 soldiers, mostly from Michigan – aptly named because of their ability to survive and battle in Russia’s snow and sub-zero temperatures. During the war, the Polar Bears fought along-side and against the Russians, who were divided by communism.

Currently pursuing a master’s degree in history, Naud portrayed both American and Russian soldiers in the documentary that was filmed near East Jordan, Michigan. “It was a great honor to be a part of this film,” said Naud, a resident of Redford. “The story of these men is all but forgotten by most Michigianians, however, the Polar Bears made a great contribution to World War I, the Cold War, and our history.”

Crownover, who researched the Polar Bears for his master’s and doctorate thesis, as well as a history textbook he authored, was interviewed for the film. He provides storytelling and expert fact and opinion throughout. The interview was filmed at Madonna University’s library. “When I teach about the Polar Bears, people are always amazed that they knew nothing about this important part of our history,” said Crownover, Novi resident and chair of Madonna University’s history department. “These brave soldiers surely have not been given the recognition they deserve.”

According to Crownover, even after WWI ended in 1919, the Polar Bears fought on in Russia for many more months. Approximately 240 Michigan soldiers lost their lives. “The surviving Polar Bears would meet every Memorial Day at White Chapel Cemetery near the grave sites of their fellow soldiers, where a polar bear monument stands in their honor,” Crownover said.

Madonna University’s Department of History offers undergraduate and master’s degree programs focused on enhancing students’ historical understanding, while strengthening their ability to analyze and interpret the past. The graduate-level curriculum takes a global approach to teaching American history that prepares students to pursue a doctorate, increase their qualifications as history teachers, or work in a variety of history-related fields.

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