



## In the Footsteps of Marco Polo - Denis Belliveau Presents to Middle and Upper School Students

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A photographer, an artist and a voracious traveler, Denis Belliveau, along with Francis O'Donnell, retraced Marco Polo's 25,000-mile land and sea journey from Venice to China and back again. Mr. Belliveau visited with Middle and Upper School students this month to recount his experiences and answer questions related to the two-year trek. In preparation for this day, Middle and Upper School history teachers shared an abbreviated version of the Emmy-nominated documentary "In the Footsteps of Marco Polo" with students.

"I have been showing portions of Denis' film in my Advanced Placement world history course for the past three years," said History Department Chair James Harris. "The Middle and Upper School history departments worked to show the film in our courses in advance of Denis' visit and I think that went a long way towards making his time here such a success."

Mr. Belliveau and Mr. O'Donnell spent 10 months researching before leaving on their journey. The

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#### Winner Announced in 13th Annual Sixth Grade Oxymoron Contest

By Todd Clarke, Grade 6 English Teacher

POSTED JANUARY 28, 2014

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pair wanted to mimic Marco Polo's voyage as much as possible so they did not use the Internet, cell phones, ATMs or digital cameras. They aimed to develop relationships with people in the United States that could connect them with people in the areas they would be traveling. Additionally, the two men wore the clothes of the locals to help them blend in and simplify what they had to pack in their bags.

"The most important equipment was my camera and film," said Mr. Belliveau during his presentation to the Upper School students. "I slept with my film until I was able to send it home to be developed."

Students asked Mr. Belliveau about financial struggles while on the expedition, the strangest things that happened while traveling, his favorite foods from the journey, language barriers and his greatest takeaways or experiences. Although Marco Polo's voyage was 25,000 miles, after two years Mr. Belliveau and Mr. O'Donnell traveled a total of 33,000 miles from beginning to end, having to deviate from the map to get visas and handle other unexpected obstacles.

**Click here** for a photo gallery.

"It was the greatest experience of my life," said Mr. Belliveau. "Everything was new. It was all strange, but beautiful."

"Denis set out to retrace the footsteps of Marco Polo on his unprecedented journey and answer the question that has lingered for centuries: Did Marco Polo really complete his legendary trek or was it simply an adventure story? The answer is a resounding YES! Through this unbelievable journey, Denis and his partner captured unforgettable images that ignite the imagination of every human who shares this planet. Denis and his groundbreaking documentary make history come to life and capture student interest in geopolitics, religion, anthropology, art, and the essence of the human condition. It is opportunities like this that remind students how fascinating life really is. I will never forget the sea of raised hands for the question and answer portion of Denis' presentation – the engagement was unparalleled," said Academic Dean Dr. Jeneen Graham.

"Walking in the Footsteps of Marco Polo" was the most inspiring lecture I've seen in my St. Margaret's career," said Catherine Clarey, grade 10. "Belliveau's courage and determination reminded me that people get so caught up in the current of everyday life that we forget what we're living for. He inspired me to make my own path using the past as a guide to my future."

Denis' photographic career has taken him to more than 60 countries where he has amassed a wealth of mesmerizing images. His work has been published in numerous magazines, periodicals and books, including *Photographic Magazine*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and the B.B.C. documentary series "Planet Earth," which aired on the Discovery Channel. He is the receiver of the Gallery Award, Eastman Kodak's highest honor for a professional photographer. He lives in New York City with his wife Lisa and sons Jake and Cary James and is currently working on his next documentary.

and Crash Landing... what are these? The answer is the winning oxymora (plural of oxymoron) entries in St. Margaret's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Sixth Grade Oxymoron Contest held at the onset of the second semester.

### **Lower School Teacher Jennifer Abbate Named Fulbright Scholar**

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Jennifer Abbate, St. Margaret's grade 2 teacher, has been named a Fulbright scholar. She is the first in school history to receive a Fulbright scholarship. From March to July of this year, Ms. Abbate will be teaching English and training elementary school teachers in Buenos Aires, Argentina public schools.

### **Exciting Admission Season at St. Margaret's**

POSTED JANUARY 23, 2014

Admission interest at St. Margaret's remains at its highest levels in each division as the first-round application deadline of February 1 approaches. With admission inquiries up, the school has worked hard to increase visit days to meet demand. Overall the Admission Office has seen a 30 percent increase from last year in applications submitted before the February 1 deadline.

### **Grade 7 Student Takes Top Honors at the Middle School Math Counts Competition**

By Stephanie Windes, Middle School Math Teacher

"Both Mr. Belliveau's video and speech were phenomenal and very exciting to watch," said Ethan Karstetter, grade 7. "It was inspiring to know that he accomplished something that most people could never even dream of doing. His entire journey, from the places he went, to the people he met, was remarkable. Moving in Marco Polo's footsteps must have taken a lot of commitment, patience and courage, which these two pioneers clearly have."

"Denis' message really pushed students to realize that so much of what they are told, or think they know about the world often comes through in black and white, when really there is a lot of grey out there. Travel and scholarship are two ways in which students can get past their biases and begin to see things for themselves, and that's what we ultimately aim for in all of our classrooms," said Mr. Harris.

"I found Mr. Belliveau's lecture and film an extremely intriguing and valuable experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about his journeys. I found his expedition to be eye opening. After seeing the film, I was amazed at the obstacles he overcame and the true diversity in every corner of the Earth," said Alyssa Maita, grade 10. "Outside of the United States and Europe I have never been anywhere else in the world, and to witness the lifestyles and daily experiences of other people astonished me. Not to mention his passion and determination to complete the journey as similar to Marco Polo was remarkable. He never quit even when he was trapped in life or death situations."

"It's amazing that two ordinary men somehow managed to retrace Marco Polo's journey hundreds of years later. They risked their lives and persevered through many obstacles to achieve their dream and the ultimate historical connection. I think that we can all learn from what they did and how they did it," said Gillian Mann, grade 7.

**Last Updated: January 24, 2014**

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Grade 7 student Drew Vollero took top honors at the Sixth Annual St. Margaret's Middle School Math Counts Competition held earlier this month in the Performing Arts Center. Sponsored by the Math Counts Program, 12 Middle School students participated in the competition.

### **PTF Parent Up Speaker Dr. Dan Siegel Presents "The Essence of Adolescence"**

**By Liana Miller, PTF Communications and Publicity Chair**

POSTED JANUARY 23, 2014

Last Friday, St. Margaret's parents, faculty and students heard renowned neuropsychiatrist and bestselling author Dr. Dan Siegel speak on whole brain parenting and teaching, as well as the power and purpose of the teenage brain.

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