



Saint Mark's High School



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Belliveau and O'Donnell in Mongolia during their journey.

Denis Belliveau Brings History to Life for Saint Mark's Students with Famed Documentary "In the Footsteps of Marco Polo"

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Belliveau and co-producer Francis O'Donnell spent two years making the documentary, which retraced Marco Polo's entire 25,000-mile, land-and-sea route from Venice to China and back. They planned their return to Venice, Polo's home, in 1995 to coincide with the anniversary of Polo's return 700 years before.

To begin, Belliveau asked students to recall the Marco Polo game many young children play and offered a theoretical explanation of how that came to be. From there, students listened enthusiastically as Belliveau explained the more important contributions Polo and his comrades made to our modern society.

In addition to helping students relate to history, Belliveau recounted the feelings of excitement and, at times, terror he and O'Donnell experienced in their two-year voyage. While they were passing through Afghanistan, the country was at war, fighting off the control of the Taliban. Several times, the explorers were held at gunpoint, narrowly escaping death and afraid that friends and family would never know what had happened to them.

"But it was all worth it," Belliveau said. "It was for the quest of a lifetime."

Belliveau, who began his career as a wedding photographer, became an award-winning documentarian with this journey. Since then he has gone to over 60 countries. His work has been published in numerous magazines, newspapers and books, including Photographic Magazine, Smithsonian Magazine, and, most recently, the BBC documentary series "Planet Earth," which aired on the Discovery Channel.

Currently, Belliveau is the director of photography and senior cameraman for the PBS series, "Real Moms, Real Stories, Real Savvy," and has received the Gallery Award, Eastman Kodak's highest honor for a professional photographer.

[To watch Belliveau's exciting documentary, CLICK HERE.](#)