

WWI Polar Bears Subject of New Documentary

Local Men Served in Action in Russia

A new film will tell the stories of young Michigan soldiers who fought in Arctic Russia under harsh conditions in World War I. At least five local men served there. The soldiers fought the Bolshevik Red Army in heavy snow and sub-zero temperatures, calling themselves the Polar Bear force, while the rest of WWI was being fought in France and other parts of Western Europe.

Wager Michael Mulcrone of St. Ignace, George Ross of St. Ignace, William Randerson of Pickford, and Edward Schultz and Peter Paul Grawey, both of Cheboygan, fought in 1918 and 1919 in the Polar Bear force. Records also show Mr. Mulcrone fought in Company G and Mr. Ross served in Company E, both featured in the film. Other local men may also have participated.

The 5,500 Michigan men who served in this little known story of the war are the subject of a new documentary that will be shown in observance of Veterans Day Monday, November 16, at 10 p.m. on CMU Public Television. WNMU Public Television will air the film at the same time.

"Voices of a Never Ending Dawn," with many scenes filmed in deep snow in Charlevoix last winter, pays homage to the young soldiers who endured temperatures of 60 degrees below zero, some while stationed in armored railroad boxcars, during the war. They continued their call to arms for eight months after WWI ended before their families' appeals to the American government returned them to the States. The documentary gives an account of the conflict, and tells the personal stories

of several of the individual soldiers who served.

Michigan men from the 339th Infantry, the 310th Engineers, and the 337th Ambulance and Hospital Companies were chosen by President Woodrow Wilson to serve in the unusual tour of duty. They were officially known as the American North Russian Expeditionary Force.

The two-hour documentary includes readings from the actual diaries of the soldiers as well as re-enacted battle scenes. All on-camera actors are from Michigan. U.S. Senator Carl Levin and Michigan historians will appear in the documentary, also.

Today, a monument to the Polar Bear soldiers stands in a cemetery in Troy, dedicated in 1930. To further recognize their service, many families of the soldiers have contributed their diaries and photographs for the film. Many have also submitted information to be added to a historical record at the Bentley Historical Library at University of Michigan.

The documentary by filmmaker Pamela Peak of Detroit is funded by veterans groups including the American Legion Department of Michigan, the VFW Department of Michigan, numerous veterans posts around the state, descendants of the soldiers, and Sergeant Major Larry Chase of Troy.

A group of re-enactors has formed to portray the battle scenes of the conflict, and includes some descendants of the Polar Bear soldiers themselves. The re-enactors are led by William Munday of Lincoln Park, who served as the film's military advisor.



Some Michigan soldiers served at "the railroad front" and lived in armored boxcars while fighting the Bolshevik Red Army in World War I. Records show George Ross of St. Ignace was among them. A new public television documentary to air Monday, November 16, will tell the story of their service. (Photograph courtesy of Michigan's Own Military and Space Museum)

Eric Kozma Completes Air Force Basic Training

Airman Eric Kozma, a 2009 graduate of Cedarville High School, was graduated Friday, October 2, from basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. He is the son of Darrell and Colleen Kozma of Hessel.

Mr. Kozma enlisted in the Air Force in the summer of 2008, prior to his senior year of high school, under the delayed entry program. His graduating flight from Lackland is the 12th Warrior Flight to be graduated in 2009. A Warrior

Flight is awarded to a squadron flight for honor and excellence in basic training. Also, he was awarded the National Defense Medal, Basic Training medal, and Expert Marksman Medal for the M-16.

Airman Kozma is now at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland for a 15-week technical school for aviation metal technician. Upon completion of the technical school, he will be stationed at Barksdale, outside Shreveport, Louisiana.

During his six-year enlistment, his goals are to perform his active duties and obtain a four-year college degree.



Eric Kozma

Island Veterans Day Ceremony Time Is Changed

The Veterans Day ceremony time on Mackinac Island Wednesday, November 11, has been changed to 11 a.m. instead of 2:30 p.m. in the Mackinac Island Public School gymnasium. The time was changed owing to the school's early dismissal that day.

Veterans Day Observances Wednesday, November 11

St. Ignace

Veterans Day Assembly, 10 a.m., St. Ignace Middle School gymnasium.

Mackinac Island

Veterans Day Assembly, 11 a.m., Mackinac Island Public School gymnasium.

Mackinaw City

Veterans Day Potluck, 6 p.m., American Legion Post. Members and their guests are invited; bring a dish to pass.

Pickford

Veterans Day Assembly, 10:45 a.m., Pickford High School gymnasium.

Cedarville, Hessel

Veterans Day Assembly, 10:15 a.m., Les Cheneaux Community School gymnasium in Cedarville.

Rudyard

Veterans Day Assembly, 8:30 a.m., Rudyard High School gymnasium.

Engadine

Veterans Day Assembly, 1 p.m., Engadine Consolidated Schools gymnasium.

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